By exchange
of duplicates.

4 May, 1876.

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER

LONDON, ... 148 *Strand*

NEW YORK, ... 139 *Grand Street*

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

By MATTHEW BROWNE, poem
for W. B. Rands

ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER
LONDON AND NEW YORK
1866

[redacted]

TO

GEORGE BOWNESS CARR, ESQUIRE,

OF WESTMORELAND AND LONDON,

MERCHANT,

AND

ALL FRIENDS ROUND SAINT PAUL'S,

WITH UNFORGETTING AFFECTION,

AND IN PRESENCE OF A GIFT TO THE WRITER,

WHICH WAS IN 1854 INSCRIBED BY

SEVEN KIND COMRADES,

WITH

AN ASSURANCE OF "THEIR DESIRE TO HOLD AND BE HELD

BY HIM LONG IN 'SWEET REMEMBRANCE.'"

[redacted]

PREFACE.

THIS is distinctly a "viewy" book. It does indeed contain decisive lines, and perhaps over-many angles, of opinion; but the form in which the matter is cast is lyrical and meditative, and it is addressed to moods and ways of looking at things—in a word, it is viewy. It is nearly always with reluctance that I write or print; so overwhelming is the sense which pursues me, as it does other men and

women with eyes, of the instant *work* to be done in the world; there seems something ignominious in talking and writing, when people are fighting, bleeding, starving, struggling, dying in shame and squalor all around. But this is an illusion, and, indeed, the desire to feel one's-self *immediately* acting on human misery is often a form of weakness, which involves temptations to be resisted. There is no part of their lives that I should advise people of a certain mould to regret so much—if I believed in "regret" at all, and, indeed, I do *not!*—as the portions which have been spent in works of "usefulness." In such labour they learnt less, and lost more than in any other labour they ever underwent. Keeping, then, by "walling in the sacred fire," whatever *cachet d'originalité* may give the smallest fraction of value to labour of mine—my path lies before me, still in the same direction as that which it has taken for these ten years. The resolute maintenance of personal ideals—mutual trust instead of mutual exaction—the embellishment of life by beautiful reserves and noble allowances (more deeply founded and more loftily directed than those of "good society")—the insignificance of circumstance and conduct as compared with

character—the unimportance of comfort compared with self-respect—the haunting, *searching* beauty, terror, and wonder of things—the necessity for instant criticism of everything that seems to threaten our sense of these, *whatever name that thing may take*—the humours and absurdities of vulgar acquiescence—these are not new topics with the hand which now holds the pen, nor will it ever weary of the effort to colour the thoughts of others in such matters; to give their minds a bent in particular directions. This, then, is, I repeat, a viewy book.

It is, indeed, the privilege of the Essay to be viewy, and I heartily wish my own essays were more and not less so than they are. Sharp, strong lines of opinion might be got out of Elia, but Charles Lamb put views, not opinions, into his Essays: and the *pure* viewy method of indoctrination is the one which I should prefer to use—if I were equal to it. But the range of manner covered by the word Essay is enormous. It takes in, for example, Bacon, Addison, Locke,* Collier, Thomas Fuller, (who is assuredly an essayist,) John Foster,

* "If any other Authors, carefull that none of their good thoughts should be lost, have publish'd their censures of my Essay, with this

Samuel Bailey, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Charles Lamb, and Leigh Hunt. In Locke and Mr Samuel Bailey you have "essays," in which the staple is hard thinking; in Addison, Lamb, De Quincey, and Hunt you have wit and humour; in Fuller, Foster, and Collier (and, in our own day, Mr Henry Rogers) you have elements of homily and religious criticism present in great strength. But, amidst all these diversities, one characteristic is uniform:—the Essay is tentative, not exhaustive, in matter; and, in manner, it stands related to other literature as conversation to oratory, or a song to an epic. When I say it is not exhaustive, I do not mean that either in an essay or elsewhere a writer should ever leave a subject unguarded at any point whatever, or that he should neglect unity of result, (in fact, the unity of an essay, like that of a short poem, should be a matter of arduous effort to the writer,) but simply that he should take a bird's-eye view of the metaphysical country rather

honour done to it, that they will not suffer it to be an Essay, I leave it to the publick to value the obligation they have to their critical Pens, and shall not wast my Readers' time in so idle or ill-natur'd an employment of mine as to lessen the satisfaction any one has in himself, or gives to others, in so hasty a confutation of what I have written."—*Locke's Preface to the Second Edition of his Essay concerning Humane Understanding.*

than walk through it. Within the last few years we have all had opportunities of reading some very admirable essays. The chief objections to some of those which I have seen are two. Not a few are mere degraded specimens of the Queen-Anne-time type. The peculium of that kind of essay is a quiet humanity, or gregariousness; and this is exhibited in a style which has been admirably characterised as "*crisp*," and with a ceaseless play of delicious humour. Take away the crispness of the style, and the humour, and you have a very poor *caput mortuum* indeed. The other objection—which however applies to essays by no means wanting in ability, scholarship, or humour—is an almost entire want of soul. The natural tendency of the modern essay is to be something between a homily and a lyric. In following the direction given to it by that bias, it fills, in my opinion, a wide and most important field in modern life—a field left, otherwise, blank in consequence of certain "developments" upon which nothing more specific shall be risked in this page. But in the hands of some able writers of the essay, it becomes a very slightly modified leading article, or semi-scientific paper. In closing his twelfth Essay, ("Of the Academical or Scep-

tical Philosophy,") Hume writes:—"When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make! If we take in hand any volume, ... let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasonings concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasonings concerning matters of fact or existence?* No. Commit it, then, to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion." And a good many writers of essays, which are yet not to be read without admiration, really seem as if they had resolved to apply this with a fanatical cold-bloodedness which positively perverts the meaning. In their desire to escape preachiness the writers appear to me to fall into the opposite error of leaving us totally *unmoved* by what they say. Every kind of prose, except the novel, seems tending to become mere criticism, or diagnosis: the Essay is made up of a sort of dinner-table "science" of life. But we have not been studying life when we have assisted at the literary vivisection of a cad; and there is yet room in literature, *pace tantorum virorum*, for something more than Clever Observations neatly docketed, and smelling, not to say stinking, of "good society" scepticism, that has just dined a shade too well. Men and women are

no more *moved* by Observations than a steamer by the wheel, or by somebody describing the man-at-the-wheel; while, by the favour of Providence, Sentiment and Impulse are, though in disgrace, as much *powers* as they were in the days of the Crusaders and the Reformers. But my business is not to criticise my contemporaries—some of whom are excellently capable of criticising me; and, indeed, I fancy I can hear beforehand some just observations on this little book—"A writer who is elliptical in thought, reiterative in assertion, and diffuse in illustration"—*u. s. w.*—it is all true, and I am very sorry!

In one of the subsequent pages I have said something about the control which accidents of business exert upon literature. Now, some of these papers have already been published in magazines; and the first printed of two or three sent in for publication together was the paper on the Table-Lands of Life—or "Late Maturity." One of the gentlemen through whose hands the proof-sheets passed thought it a somewhat contentious *plaidoyer* for the old folks; so, having other reasons for fancying me a contradictory person, he playfully headed the proof, "By a Senior Wrangler;" and one or two other essays, actually in type, received the same heading. I very

rarely look at anything of my own writing till I am downright driven to it, and sometimes flinch for hours —or days—from reading a proof; so that the fact of this heading, and a possible misconstruction of it, were not in the least present to my mind, till a friend, recognising my "sweet Roman hand," asked me in what year I had been S.W. What had happened was obvious—the first essay had received that playful heading because it was supposed everybody would see the meaning of it, and then the two others had taken it as a matter of course. I then undid as far as possible what had not been my doing. This is an unimportant matter, scarcely worth mentioning; but some day, when I see that it can be done without mischief, I may specify a few cases in which, by the mere exercise of the critical faculty, I have discovered that accidents of business have contributed to the total effect of book or magazine literature in particulars of some consequence. The obvious difficulty is that, in using knowledge obliquely arrived at, one must be hitting in the twilight, and might do great injustice to somebody or other. But I may at least call attention here again, as I have done in another page, to the 4th section of the 14th chapter of the 2d book of Mr Mill's

"Principles of Political Economy"—the last sentence especially.

I cannot make this reference without a passing word upon the very cool complaints which some writers have recently been uttering about the extreme impropriety of quoting Mr Mill's opinions as authoritative. The answer is, that nobody does so quote them. The opinions in connexion with which there is a tendency to quote the name of Mr Mill, for the sake of its influence, are chiefly ridiculed, hunted, badgered, almost persecuted opinions; against which all the brute force permitted to literature now-a-days is freely used. On the side of those who so use that force, with or without a mask of good manners, are numbers, social repute, comfort, convenience, and everything that can possibly make it safe or profitable to hold an opinion. For people thus entrenched to complain that some poor little militant crotchet, fighting at tremendous odds, should shelter itself from the charge of baseness or stupidity by quoting the name of Mr Mill, is bitterly ridiculous. "Don't quote authority—you trouble the stream." Did these polite hypocrites of controversy ever hear of the Wolf and the Lamb?

CONTENTS.

I.—AN APOLOGY FOR THE NERVES.

CONSIDERED as white threads, efferent or afferent, belonging either to the cerebro-spinal or sympathetic system, the Nerves require, so far as I am aware, no apology. An apology for the Glands, or the Tendons, or the Medulla Oblongata, would be just as much to the purpose. We know that between Dogmatism and Final Causes men fall to the ground; and that Paley has, in his "Natural Theology," felt it polite to offer something like an apology for one or two cork-trees for which he could find no ginger-beer bottles.* But if the reader expects

* I suppose everybody knows that this about cork-trees and ginger-beer bottles is an illustration from Goethe.

any of the gory crudities of physiology in this paper he will be disappointed: pretty certainly he does not expect any, but he must be a very small reader if his experience has not taught him that he must constantly submit to be informed of unnecessary things. It is part of the established economy of the essay to exclude, with flourishes of phrase, what no human being would ever suppose was going to be taken in.

The Nerves, then, for our present purpose, are, "as one should say," the Nerves! If, as scientific men assure us, there is, without Nerve, no Thought, (this deviation from the rule just laid down is more apparent than real, and if it were real, is only the felicitous exception which illuminates the rule,) we can hardly have too much of the Nerves, unless we of Thought can have too much. Perhaps it may maliciously be said that we can, and that something depends upon the quality. No doubt; but we can also have too little. Taken absolutely, Thought is a good thing; and I appeal to common experience to declare if an excess of a good thing is Nature's rule? On the contrary, it is so decidedly her exception, that a proverb, of that defiant tone which is usual in proverbs which apply to exceptions, has been made on purpose to include the accident when it does happen to happen. Yet there is such a prejudice against the Nerves, that even the Muscles have been preferred to them, and that, too, in a connexion the most unlikely.

People have been known to write and to paint with their toes and their mouths; and some have pretended to see with their stomachs; but no human being has yet pretended to think with his Muscles, or feel with his Muscles. Who

ever heard of the aspiration of a biceps? And yet we have been told of Muscular Christians, never of Nervous Christians. It is true the phrase Muscular Christianity has been repudiated by Mr Kingsley, and very properly; but not, as I conceive, on sufficiently broad grounds. A Christian must, like other people, have muscles, macerate him as you will; nor is it easy to conceive him without bones. But I appeal to physiologists whether the Sympathetic Nervous System is not reckoned a great channel of emotion? (this is another felicitous and illuminating exception, admitted because a *solitary* exception is always held in suspicion.) The philosophic physiologist is welcome to suggest that the real final synthesis of nature defeats all such distinctions; but, in the meantime, a nervous Christian is a far more natural combination than a muscular one.

The truth, however, is, that the Nerves are the objects of systematic enmity and depreciation among mankind at large. Fat, however it may excite complaint in the fat person, is not, I believe, an object of enmity, except in an omnibus, or in some position where it occupies an unusual portion of the planetary space. Prophetic denunciations against such as be fat in Zion are on record; none against such as be nervous. Yet the fat man is tolerated, loved, at worst laughed at: while the nervous man is not only laughed at, he is disliked. But is it Fat that has been the chief benefactor of the human race? Was it a fat man that invented printing? Was it a fat man that discovered the circulation of the blood? Was George Stephenson fat? Were the martyrs fat men? Heliogabalus was, (at all

events, he had a fat name;) but was Antoninus? Julius Cæsar, though for his own selfish ends he preferred fat men about his person, was he fat himself? Was Hampden a fat man? Was Milton? Was Cromwell? Was William III.? No; it was George IV. who was the fat man: and he built the fat pavilion at Brighton. Charles James Fox was fat; but he gambled. Falstaff was fat; but he was not a respectable character. Hamlet, again, was fat; but he believed in ghosts, and was such a very undecided young man, that nobody can make him out. The fattest man of modern times is a distinguished undertaker—he *may* make good coffins, but I am not a judge of coffins. On the other hand, is Mr Tennyson fat? Is Mr John Stuart Mill fat? Is Mr Browning fat? Is Mr Gladstone fat? No; the nation would not trust its income with a fat man; it knows better. The only fat financier I ever heard of was Mr Hudson, the railway king. Thus, it is with nervous men that we trust our money, and it is from nervous men that we expect all that makes money worth having. Or if this statement should be too wide, let it be met by contradiction—there are plenty of contradictory people in the world—and the other side have too long had it all their own way—have too long been permitted to treat the Nervous as not only miserable in themselves, but the causes of misery in others.

Part of this results from sheer error in classification. It was with extreme indignation that I once read "Dr Trotter (of Bath) on the Nervous Temperament"—a book lent to me by a friend, who supposed me to be, as a nervous man, both wretched and a cause of wretchedness. In Dr Trotter

I found an elaborate discussion of—Indigestion! His idea of a nervous person was, I found, a person who had "the wind;" who had a poor appetite; who had ignominious symptoms not to be particularised; who suffered from "borborrigmi." And his prescriptions were such beggarly elements as calcined magnesia: gentian: exercise: occupation; and "the warm gums." I returned the book with disgust, assuring my friend that, however nervous I might be, I never had the wind; knew nothing of borborrigmi; ate like a trooper; walked ten miles a day; and had ample occupation. To this hour I find people who "understand" (ah, how people do "understand" things!) that I am nervous, suppose that what they call nervousness is a sort of disease. They recommend rhubarb, or peppermint drops, or more exercise, or pale ale. The fact is, they do not understand vivacity of sensation. They think it is a complaint; they localise it in the regions under or below the waistband; and prescribe to the nervous just as a penguin or a porpoise might prescribe to a darting swallow or a leaping salmon.

Thus, the nervous suffer in popular estimation because they are confounded with the dyspeptic, and, it may be added, with the hysterical. There is a complaint, or manifestation, or something, which in the days of Pamela and Joseph Andrews was known as the megrims, or the doldrums, or the vapours; it was a fine madam's common excuse for not being seen, or for neglecting a duty, and it was supposed to be cured by Hungary water, for which the modern succedaneum is red lavender. I found all the symp-

toms of the "megrims" described in Dr Trotter's book as symptoms of the nervous temperament. In the name of the brotherhood, I indignantly repel the slander; that is just the way of the world—it never will discriminate. Let hysterics speak for themselves, *we*, the real honest nervous ladies and gentlemen, do *not* have "a difficulty in swallowing," and, most distinctly, do *not* have "St Vitus's dance," which is described by the infamous Trotter as part of the ordinary diagnosis of our temperament! I speak both in sorrow and in anger, but without surprise; for have not many of us, comrades in nervousness, been asked, "What makes you so nervous? You should take tonics!" when we were no more nervous in that sense than the jubilant shrimp at sunset, or the lark in the happy agitation of his matin song.

The truth is, the vulgar phlegmatic do not love to see others lively and brisk. A creature with only a few sides—say two, an inside and an outside—is naturally jealous of another with a hundred facets, or is at least puzzled by it. So, a crocodile, which takes fifteen minutes to turn round, might fancy a kitten chasing its own tail mad or diseased. True, as we all know, or as the attendants at many places of public entertainment will tell us if we ask, the phlegmatic vulgar are particularly fond of watching machinery in motion, anything that "goes of itself" is a passion with them. But then there is here no room for comparison or jealousy. The phlegmatic man knows that he might stop a steam-bobbin; that, in any case, he can do things the bobbin cannot do, and that *somebody* could make another bobbin. But he cannot repress the disturbing mobility of the nervous

man; he may impute borborrigmi, and recommend potass or cardamoms, or even "the warm gums;" but he could not have given Elizabeth Barret Browning in charge for reminding him of a fire-fly, or stopped Douglas Jerrold like a steam-bobbin. Thank heavens, we have yet our Magna Charta, our Bill of Rights, our liberty of the subject! *Sunt certi denique fines*—there are limits, and it galls him.

One thing remains—he can confound nervousness with indigestion, and make it odious by maladive associations innumerable. It is high time to write this Apology, and disclaim the whole, from indescribable Agony, and Incapacity for Business, to the end of the alphabet. We nervous folk have *no* agony, and are *not* incapable. Our Nerves are not disease, they are capacity; we have as much right to wonder at your lethargy as you at our vivacity.

Nervous people, again, are constantly confounded with ill-tempered people. Now, the one essential condition of genuine ill-temper is stupidity. It is the fool, and the fool only, he who cannot quickly distinguish between accident and design, and readily trace effects to causes, that is angry without cause, or for more than a minute *beyond* cause. Now, your nervous man is not often a fool—how should he be?—and is rarely *absurd* in his anger. It is true he may often be tempted to express his disgust at the ineptitudes of others, but what then? a sensitive creature,

> " . . . . . more sensible
> Than are the tender horns of cockled snails,"

(is that correct?) must have some means of protecting

itself. There are limits to human endurance, and who will have the boldness to fix them? Job was patient, but "did Job e'er lose a barrel of such ale?" When the fire has been let out, and the door left unshut, and the letter put into the wrong box, and the sheet put damp on the bed for the seven times seventieth time; when "gentle dulness," glorying in its shame, has had my right cheek and my left, is the common privilege of speech to be denied me? No; and if my speech is pungent, it is a mercy to gentle dulness, as well as a relief to me. In Homer even the wounded god may complain; is the right of complaint refused to me, because I happen to understand the use of words? How is gentle dulness to know its differentia unless the nervous people howl when hit, and use appropriate and convincing language? The displeased surprise which the sensitive involuntarily manifest at the insensibility of the insensible is a beneficent provision for the Education of the Human Race. This is a great topic, and worthy of extensive treatment. The average human being, he who is always speaking opprobriously of the Nerves, is distinguished by three characteristics:—

1. He never knows when a thing is going to happen.
2. He never knows when a thing is happening.
3. He never remembers a thing when it has happened.

These melancholy features, which are, in truth, the brand of inferiority, he turns to a boast. It is the function of the nervous, a function not free from pain, to worry him into proper sensibility. If he knew his place, and his obligations, he would sing hymns in praise of his benefactors:—

"Who taught me when there was a draught,
And show'd me perils fore and aft,
And frown'd when I, untimely, laughed?
The Nervous!

"Who told me when the glass would rise
Or fall, and with their prophecies
Or recollections, made me wise?
The Nervous!

"Who heard a crash before it fell,
And knew things were not going well,
And would some warning story tell?
The Nervous!

"Who, when I was a pachyderm,
By many a proper, piercing term,
Thinned my hard skin, so coarse and firm?
The Nervous!"

The difference between the nervous and those who depreciate them is not, however, to be expressed by such a figure as that of a difference in the thickness of the skin. Compared with the phlegmatic vulgar the nervous have *antennæ*—they have a sixth sense—a second sight! They "see as from a tower the end of all," when others see only fog. They are the Jessie Browns of every Lucknow.* They are the Hugin and Mugin of Odin's ears. They possess all the fairies' gifts that the unselfish need care for. They carry the turquoise that turns yellow at the approach of a lie; and, to make an end of raptures, they have their

* I am told for the thousandth time that this story is not true. But what business is that of mine? I roll the responsibility back upon the originator—why should we doubt a gentleman's word? "Gentleman, indeed!" says a voice—"it was a penny-a-liner!" But surely a man may tell the truth at a penny a line—he is far more likely to grow florid if you offer him a guinea a line.

inconveniences, and very often get their light narrow wheels knocked about by the abounding heavy broad wheels of life. But their revenges compensate them. When Count D'Orsay, in his filmily-built chaise, struck off the wheel of a stupid, stolid brewer's dray that obstinately blocked the path, he called it the triumph of mind over matter. Such is the triumph of the nervous element over the phlegmatic element in human affairs. And, if it sometimes gets the worst of it, what then? "You young rascal," said the old gentleman to the rash little boy in the street, "if that cab had run over you, where would you have been then?" and the boy answered, "Up behind, a-takin' of his number!" Just so; when vulgar brute force runs over Nerve, where is Nerve immediately? Why, "Up behind, a-takin' of his number!" It is a glorious mission.

All men despise, or think they despise, or pretend to despise, cowards. And—this is another misrepresentation—with cowards the nervous are perpetually confounded. Now, let us waive all distinctions—which, indeed, can never be made final—between moral and physical courage, and it will certainly not be found that the bravest men are the least nervous. The greatest of the Napiers was an exquisitely nervous man. The late Rev. F. W. Robertson of Brighton may be said to have died of a fine nervous system—but he had all the instincts and characteristics of a soldier, and sacrificed himself to his father's wish in entering the Church instead of the army. The list of illustrative instances might be much extended; but it is unnecessary. Without pushing beyond the truth—looking candidly round

the whole subject—we must all of us see that it is absurd to suppose the highest forms of any fine quality exhibited by the lower organisations. The very essence of being "nervous" is apprehensiveness, or being quick to apprehend things. This may minister to fearfulness, but it is not fear. The hawk is not afraid of his prey because he sees it afar off, nor the savage of his enemy because he hears the tramp of his advance miles away in the desert.—But a nervous writer, using similes like these on a simple subject, in a playful vein, is afraid of making the subject absurd, and stops short. Indeed, the correction contained in *this* paragraph is a commonplace—it might very well have been omitted.

It may be taken for granted by phlegmatic people that the apprehensiveness of the high nervous temperament is far greater than it appears, or than it can be intelligibly represented to be. We all know the famous Turner anecdote. "Mr Turner, I never saw blues and reds like yours in the sky!" "No, ma'am; but don't you wish you could?" Now, in truth, no human being need desire to change places with another—it may be my mistake, but I do not believe any human being ever does, or did, or will wish to relinquish his identity: no, not on the rack. But that the "nerves" see "blues and reds" which others do not see; that the difference between moderate nerve and much nerve is the difference between the apprehensiveness of a babe and the apprehensiveness of a grown person is as certain as that twice three are six. In reality the old schoolboy story of "Eyes and No-Eyes" ought to be called Nerves and No-Nerves; although an image borrowed from the sense of sight may help

us to apprehend the difference between an organisation like that of the stout tradesman next door, and De Quincey or Hartley Coleridge. I have often wondered how short-sighted men are affected by female beauty. How do they feel in a ball-room for instance? Necessarily, short sight must miss seeing loveliness at the farther end of the room; while ordinary sight might have the whole current of his life changed by it. How ridiculous, one might here say, is our moral criticism of each other, unless we regard it as give-and-take, tit-for-tat—not that my wrongness is lessened by your wrongness, you know, or that moral distinctions are obliterated, but that in what may be called the courtesies of ethics, the mote must remember the beam. And this, again, is a commonplace.

I do not at all know whether human conditions are equally balanced, nor even whether they are "*pretty* equally" balanced or not. It is often asserted, but nobody knows anything about it. But in mere quantity of sensation, the nervous people would probably claim to have the best of it. What, in the pleasures of sense? Yes, certainly, says our nervous friend; a fig for your pleasures of sense! What is "sense?" Do you mean to tell me that the man who could "die of a rose in aromatic pain" does not get more delight out of "sense" than a horn-handed clown? more even at given hours, to say nothing of memory and hope; the echo, the refraction, the resonance, the reduplications of joy?

> . . . . . "Let spirit star the dome
> Of flesh, that flesh may miss no peak!"

Do you mean to tell me that if Nerves sees the sun before he

rises and after he sets, as well as all the time he is above the horizon, he does not get more pleasure out of the sun? Yes, says No-Nerves, I do mean to say that; he has discounted his pleasure, and his memory is regret. And, ah, how I can plague him! I can bang doors, and stump about over his head till he maddens! I can spoil all his pleasures by slipping in little sly drops—one drop to a cup is enough!—of poison that others would not taste. And I know that the shifting winds, and the creeping clouds, the hang of a curl, the delay of a minute, the suspicion that some one is in pain, a knock at the door, a cat on the tiles, a mere film or phantasm of a smile or a frown, can make him uncomfortable.—Ah, says Nerves, you know all that, do you? But you do not know enough. This hyperapprehensiveness of mine is far greater than you fancy. You would shrink into nothing, collapse, *zusammenfahren*, if you knew it all. You think I am irritable sometimes? In the scientific sense always, but in the base sense not so often—

> "What's done you partly may compute,
> But never what's resisted;"—

and if I were to let you see how much I discern of cause for irritation, you would discern how much I forbear. But life would be impossible to us both if I were to make disclosures. My friend, I not only know that I am surrounded by Things and Persons as you do; I have in addition an incessant sixth sense of Things and Persons, of what is past, present, and to come. You live in the world, No-Nerves. I live in the world, and in a refracting atmosphere of the world as well.

Which is the better man of the two? I don't know. Which is the happier? I don't care.

For this style of answer may be quoted at least the authority of Confucius.* Some one asked him how many stars there were in the sky? "I don't know," said he, "I mind things near me." The questioner resumed, "Then how many hairs are there in the cat's back?" "I don't care," said the philosopher. This is the quip-heroic—omitted by Touchstone in his well-known enumeration. But to deal more civilly with the matter. An elderly lady once asked me how I thought a person would feel who was sure of going to heaven. In a long and very eloquent speech, I told her my views. To my surprise, she was not comforted; but, on the contrary, began to cry, saying, "Ah, then, I shall never go to heaven, for I never felt like that!" But in five minutes I had convinced her that she *did* feel like that. I simply altered the phraseology of my description, and she recognised the picture at once—she *had* felt just what I described. The moral is obvious. Let no person who happens to read anything here written of the joys of nervousness go a-crying and say, "I never felt like that!"—a little explanation might set all to rights. Very likely you have been talking prose all your life without knowing it. All I say is, do not let us have any abuse of the Nerves. Do not confound nervousness with the megrims, or the doldrums, or any other complaint. Do not confound it with cowardice or ill-temper. And, when

* This anecdote is slightly altered from the shape in which it usually appears. In *that* shape it is illogical. Once for all, let me say, that if I ever modify a quotation or an anecdote, it is with cause, and in such a way as to do it no injustice.

you come into practical relations with it in daily life, put it upon its defence as seldom as you can. *It never forgets*—and if it is a decent sort of nervousness, it will reward you some day for not driving it into anything more than general and remote apologies like the present.

II.—ON WATCHING FOR THE NEXT THING.

THERE is reason to believe that some people never watch, so that their lives never contain any Next; things happen, and there is an end. It is doubtful if such persons could understand Cato's soliloquy, or Hamlet's. If they have any feeling about death, indeed, it must be that it is next—to nothing; but probably they have none. Such people, however, even if they ever read, cannot be readers of any consequence; for the better part of the interest of reading lies in watching for the next idea. Let us, then, leave the consideration of pleasing these good folks till—next time. Their constitutional peculiarity will prevent their feeling the slight. But in the meanwhile we may, in

passing, compassionate them; for theirs is in many ways a melancholy lot. They can never enter with zest into the higher mathematics. They can feel no joy in thinking of the infinite divisibility of matter. They can take no proper interest in dissolving views or inexhaustible bottles. They could not possibly become absorbed in Fearne on Contingent Remainders, or astrology, or unfulfilled prophecy, or chess, or the kaleidoscope, or anything that comes Next. They must stick to their Last; and, for my part, I would not stand in their shoes.

It is plain, among other things, that the persons of whom we now speak, could never, in childhood, have snatched the fearful joy which you and I have tasted upon being authentically told that we should die after It. *This* demands an acute apprehension of the Next—and they have none at all. They can appreciate no argument founded upon succession. They never enjoyed the spectacle of a file of soldiers coming round a corner, or a flight of birds coming up from behind a clump of trees, or even a flight of stairs in a proper manner. What could a man of this kind make of Jacob's ladder? or of the paying out of the Atlantic telegraph, for that matter? It must surely have been a witness of this order who gave that ridiculous answer to the barrister's simple question, which way the stairs ran. "One way they ran up, and the other way they ran down." To a properly constituted mind there are few objects of greater interest than a corkscrew, but the class of whom we speak could make nothing of such an instrument.

To some lukewarm person who had never quite approfounded the subject, we are, doubtless, indebted for the

popular proverb, which informs us that the watched kettle never boils. Then, pray, what does it do? Are we to be told that a kettle is conscious, and has a will, or that the laws of matter are suspended? I will maintain, to my last cup of tea, that the singing of a kettle is unconscious, metaphorical; and that watching one communicates no disinclination to come up 212° Fah. The proverb is either a parable or a *jeu d'esprit*—take your choice. If a parable the Kettle is the Universe; which, to human eyes, is ever on the boil, never boiling; always growing, never full-grown Or, again—and this will please people who like a good moral —the kettle is the work in watching which the watcher neglects some plain duty; and, in that case, the meaning is, Leave your Kettle to the fire underneath it, and go and do the next thing that lies handy. But there is a *nextiness* about this view of the subject, which throws doubt upon the kind of author to whom the proverb should be attributed. Taken as a metaphysical *jeu-d'esprit*, the meaning is clear—we heard the same sort of thing from the Brazen Head in the middle ages, you know. If you *watch*, the kettle never boils; it is either going to boil, or it *has* boiled. This is evidently the product of a mind like that which said the stairs ran up one way and down the other; and, unless it be taken as a pure jest, is a remarkable instance of human depravity. As a practical joke, it may pass—it is like taking away a man's chair when he is wanting to sit down; but otherwise it is the *oubliette* of Consciousness. It is rubbing out the *punctum stans*, and destroying the Eternal Now. And what is the next thing?

The nearest practical approach to *this* view of the case of the watched kettle is that of sleep that is watched for. Many of us know what it is to lie in bed, counting the hours, and watching for unconsciousness. Now, this is manifestly absurd of us. We are as bad as the man who said he would go and see in the glass how he looked with his eyes shut; or as the man who, keeping his pigtail behind, fancied he could see it by turning his head. These errors are founded upon misconceptions of the eternal nature of things, which are as plain to the meanest capacity as that you cannot have your cake and eat it; and the melancholy fate of the two men is well known. The man with the pigtail grew so infatuated with the chase, that the speed of gyration became unbearable, and he span to death: the Irishman tried so persistently to look into his own shut eyes, reflected in a mirror, that he at last fancied he had become a camera obscura, or a catoptric cistula, I forget which, and alienated all his friends by changing to be looked at.

Well, you and I may, and, let us hope, shall, escape the fate of these men; but we are quite as ridiculous when we watch for sleep. What we know is, that we are not asleep, and that we want to be; but it is impossible to know the fact, when the essence of being asleep is to not know that you are awake. If Dr Wigan were right—if (I hope I do not misrepresent him?) the two hemispheres of the brain could carry on separate lives, and hold different opinions, and argue with each other, and convey different impulses to the motor nerves—*then* we might look forward to being

asleep, and knowing it. But who would wish for a double-action brain, unless, indeed, he contemplated making a fortune by going about in a show, like a spotted baby, and then subsiding, upon his retirement, into becoming uniformity? Double consciousness might be agreeable at times, and under very complicated conditions, but it could never rank higher than throwing up two balls at a time for amusement. I would, myself, never trust a man who was Protestant with half his head, and Romanist with the other half; nor would the policemen, to say nothing of the street-boys, permit, in public thoroughfares, a man to stand in one spot all day long, with his right leg propelling him one way, and his left the other. Besides, if such a constitution were to be encouraged, what would become of Social Science? You would have double columns of averages directly; and indeed, my little boy—whom I sometimes terrify out of his noisiness by telling him that I am solving the Problem of the Three Bodies (which he takes to be corpses)—asks, innocently, if a man with a double-action brain would not have to solve the Problem of the *Six* Bodies? Think of that! Think of multiplying the Mystery of Things by two!

In the *Palais de la Verité* of Madame de Genlis, there is a fairy who, in the revenges of her jealousy, sentences her husband's mistresses to all manner of fantastic punishments. One of them, a very vivacious girl, she condemns to an apparently endless stay in a country made on purpose, consisting entirely of level grass, smooth green sea, and cloudless sky bending over. Unless the poor creature had been rescued she would have gone mad, watching for something

to be next. There are situations in life when the passion of watching has made the mind like a voice that has reached the sensitive note—it grazes the brink of the next, which seems as if it must come. One's feeling in such a case is almost one of madness, if there be much suspense. A rapid, seemingly endless succession of nexts is capable of giving the same feeling, of maddening the mind; but, also, of soothing it. Who does not know what it is to look over the side of a vessel, and watch the swift-following waves, or the swift-following bubbles of the foaming track, with a feeling that if the line were broken, if one single *next* were missed, it would be madness, despair, and infinite darkness, as if the world must at that moment end? I have done it myself, till it seemed as if my heart would stop beating, and with it the great pendulum of God, which beats time for heaven and earth, if the pace of the current were broken. So, again, with a field of waving wheat, or blowing grass, or a mass of woodland bent by a great even wind. It has seemed to me as if no note of passion, no shriek of agony, or shout of joy—for either would do—could be strong enough to express sympathy with a meadow of buttercups tossed and retossed by the wind. If that should be the last undulation—if the golden flowers should wave no more! A feeling as of drowning, as of sense half-submerged in a fall fathoms deep through silent water, comes over me—there is, already, a singing in my ears, and a mist before my eyes—the time is, in reality, only a part of a second, but it seems an æon till the next wave comes. But it *has* come—they move, they laugh, the golden billows—the pen-

dulum of God has not stopped beating—it is not yet the day of nothingness and silence. It is at such a moment as this that the horizon strikes the eye afresh with a sense of infinity. Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and in the pulses of an endless flight there would be something to silence the beatings of my heart!

If there are readers who can remember nothing in their own moods of which this is a very faint copy, there are, I must think, but few who will not be able to recall something like it in connexion with music. Have you never felt as if the close of some exquisite strain of harmony must be *followed* by something, or that your heart must that moment cease to beat? No man can see God, and live, might the rapt soul say; but what remains but that I *should* see Him, and die? And then there is the beating sound in the ears, the half-moment of watching, scarcely conscious, with a feeling as if some monstrous bird, blacker than a thousand midnights, were sweeping up, up, up, from the underworld behind, to darken all, and end all, if nothing comes. And nothing comes. But these

> "Fallings from us, vanishings,
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realised,"

do not pass without being remembered; sometimes we can recall them at one bound of thought; and then—

> "Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,

And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

Wordsworth, in his "Essay on Epitaphs," says, that "there never was a child who, standing by a stream, did not wonder where it came from, and where it would go to." If such a child there were, he would, of course, be father to the man (if such a man there really is, and I fear I have hinted as much) who never watches for the next thing. But there are, in truth, perhaps few children, perhaps none, who have not felt what we may call the transient madness, the hysteric passion, of watching for the next thing. Some have felt it, as adults weakened by fever have felt it, on merely looking at the dancing spangles of a chandelier; others in looking at a tree, the top of which just peeped over the gable of a house-roof; or at the swift-rising moon. The tree seems as if it must grow higher that instant; and what then? what will *not* happen? The moon, as if she must climb swiftly up to a given mark, and then up to another, and another—and what will be the consequence? what will *not* be the consequence? A passage in a well-known poem of Wordsworth's, in which the dropping of the moon behind a cottage-roof is followed by a suggestion of the death of his Lucy, may help to redeem this kind of phantasy from contempt in the minds of my readers—if any—who feel that it is too trivial to be worthy of a thought. But, indeed, nearly all men, in highly-wrought moods, have sensations which are analogous. It was not a child, a weakling, or a fantastic person, into whose mouth the same poet put words such as these—he was only a man in love:—

"The clouds pass on; they from the heavens depart:
I look—the sky is empty space;
I know not what I trace;
But when I cease to look, my hand is on my heart.

"Thou Eglantine, whose arch so proudly towers,
(Even like a rainbow spanning half the vale,)
Thou one fair shrub, oh! shed thy flowers,
And stir not in the gale.

"For thus to see thee nodding in the air,
To see thy arch thus stretch and bend,
Thus rise and thus descend,—
Disturbs me till the sight is more than I can bear."

"The man," Wordsworth continues, "who makes this feverish complaint, is of giant stature, and could dance in iron mail." But this is what love has brought him to! Love, who "has been a villain since the days of Troy and Helen; who caused the fall of Paris, and a good many more."

There are times when a quick succession of nexts is found merely soothing; but they are times of reactionary languor, when there is not left force enough to watch; when what we attend to is the rhythm only. Thus, we may find the ticking of a clock soothing—indeed, to mention this is commonplace. But what a dreadful effect may be produced upon the mind by the sudden *cessation* of the ticking of a clock, when once a certain experience has been gone through! Who that has counted the beatings of a pulse, or listened to the flutterings of a breath, watching for the next, and the next, and the next, and coming at last to the one which has no next, can bear, without agony, to hear a watch or a clock stop ticking, or to hear any rhythmical sound cease suddenly? Reader, one of the most horrible moments of my

life was a moment in which the rhythmical noise of a common saw, heard over the parapet of a bridge in London, stopped suddenly, when I was listening for it.* In the distance, the sound was softened; it had a *sough* with it, which reminded me, not too painfully, of the sound of human breath; but when it *ceased*, I thought I could bear no more in this world, and longed to be that moment taken away. Of course, the emotion of that moment was imported from my recollection of a moment of which it was the symbol; but I think the sudden cessation of anything with a *beat* in it was always a terror to me.

The fact is, there are some of us who have too much nextiness in our composition. "Can you draw an inference?" said Coleridge to the clown. "Yes, sir," says the clown, "a cartload of 'em!" That is the way with you and me: we are too eager to draw our cartload of inferences; and when we find the inferences will not be drawn, we suffer. No man can live into the middle of next week. Respect the almanack. How can you possibly have a whole twelvemonth at once? There is this peculiarity about the Next Thing, remember—that it is sure to come, whether you watch or not. And what a blessing there is in certainty! What relief in the thought that something must happen! We know the difficulty, *nous autres*, of holding in check our tyrannical, habitual, mood of *passing-on*. Every second of time in our experience throws out a pontoon bridge to the

* I paused very long before putting this into words, for the eyes of others; and now it seems as if I ought to strike it out. But it is sometimes more difficult to decide upon recalling what was unwillingly written, than it was to overcome the unwillingness to write it. Let it pass, then.

next. We live by a clock that has two sets of hands on the same dial-plate: one is right, and the other is always too fast. Our twelve o'clock is twelve-and-something-short-of-one-o'clock. This depends upon congenital peculiarities, of course,—we cannot wholly help it, and why should we try to? Still it is painful to have to confess, for example, that the longest musical key-board ever made to a piano appears too short to us. It *is* so. Looking at a piano, the other evening, in a dreamy mood, I was afresh struck with a sense of the truncated or arrested appearance of the series of black and white keys—of course they stop when they *must*. "It is a nice one, isn't it?" said the lovely mistress of the instrument, bending her fair head over the cabinet of sweet sounds. "Imperfect," said I, lazily. "Dear me, where, Mr Browne?" she inquired. "The key-board," I replied, "is not long enough." "Why," she resumed, "it's full compass—they do not sell them larger—how many octaves would you have?" "How many?" said I, "millions! When you get to the last, there ought to be one next to it; and one next to that." "Dear me!" said the lady, "it would be like the picture in the 'Vicar of Wakefield'—you could not get it into the room!" "No," said I, "it needn't be—you might have it round. Music stools are always made to turn on an axis; so it would be easy to play upon." "Oh, Mr Browne!" said this beautiful girl, "you are joking—think how giddy I should be!" "Then," said I, "let it go straight on till it comes to a stop; let it shade off into Space! There is plenty of room in the universe. People talk about wanting room for this, that, and the other, when extension is

unbounded! I lay it down as a first principle that nothing ought ever to leave off!" "Oh, Mr Browne!" said my friend, "*what next?*"

Now, if nothing were ever to leave off, how could anything ever be next? But we do not expect a lady to be logical, so I did not press the point. Nor did I recommend her to read that great Christian Father who believed that at the Resurrection of the dead all bodies would be of a round form, because that was the only perfect figure. His private character may have been, and indeed was, virtuous; but he reasoned in a vicious circle. If everything is supposed globular, and the globes are all concentric, the intelligence, placed outside, sees no question of *next*. But *movement* in a circle does not satisfy the mind which has once been fascinated with the charm of indefinite nextiness. I have often thought I should like to be lifted up on the wings of some huge, hovering bird, to such a height that, looking down, I could see the billows of the ocean, dark-green curves fringed with white, chasing one another, on and on, in an everlasting round. But there is always an unsatisfactory feeling comes over me when I picture to myself the last wave seething up to the same spot again, like the imaginary ship in the catechism of geography. It seems so foolish of it—as bad as a comet, which has always appeared to me a stupid form of being, *for coming back again:* would not a billow of any spirit watch his opportunity and go off into space, gradually changing the parabolic inflection of the start into a straight line? That is *my* feeling. Hence, I love better to think of the sea as a

nis in which dip the feet of the children, we shall
ie next. And always, and always, the next. How
all we watch?

III.—THE GIVE AND TAKE OF LIFE.

ONCE upon a time a poor "natural," who was employed to blow the bellows in the organ-loft of a country church, overheard the organist speaking of his performances to admiring parishioners, and noticed that he spoke in the first person singular only. "Last time I played 'Sing, O heavens,' next time I shall play 'With verdure clad.'" That was the way in which the organist spoke, and it went to the very heart of the poor bellows-blower.

At the first opportunity that offered, the idiot expostulated with the musician upon the injustice of his phraseology. "*It is* all very well for you to say *I* played the organ," re-

monstrated the lad, "but where does the wind come from?" In these, or some such words, he endeavoured to assert his own share in the anthem; but the organist only said, "Pooh, pooh!—go about your business."

At the next public service in the church, a special piece of music being announced for performance, the organist, well prepared for the occasion, by study of *his* part, was in his place before the key-board. The moment came to begin. His well-trained fingers descended upon the scale, but the only result was an abortive flop. He tried again, with no better fortune. Then he looked up, and saw the face of the idiot grinning round the corner of the instrument.

"Blow away, do!" said the organist, with agony.

"Shall it be *we?*" said the idiot, with his hand upon the lever of the bellows.

"Nonsense, Joe, do as I bid you!" replied the performer in an angry whisper, and once more tried to bring music out of the organ. But it was as dumb as a four-post bedstead, or a kitchen-dresser.

"Shall it be *we?*" said the idiot, again looking round the corner.

"Yes, yes; *we*, *we*,—anything you please!" said the organist, in despair. The idiot blew the bellows, and the anthem proceeded.

The story has wide applications, not only in politics and in commerce, but in other spheres of thought and action. According to the British constitution, the bellows-blowers of the body politic can, if they please, insist upon the *we*, because they have the voting of the supplies through their

representatives. That is the theory; but in how many things are the bellows-blowers ignored when they can hardly help themselves! Shall it be *we?* is a question which might be carried all round life. Everybody who reads a printed book—not to say everybody who buys one—may be said to have contributed to the writing of it. Every word, look, or thought of sympathy with heroic action, helps to make heroism. Every smile of every child of the large family that taxes the strength of the bread-winner, helps him to win the bread. Every prayer, spoken or not, that rises to heaven for the right and good, is so much help to the honest man. Every possible thought, every possible labour, helps every other. If some of those enormous masses of human effort—expressed in pale faces, in drooped limbs, in heart and brain out-spent,—masses of human effort, of which we do not habitually make reckoning, were struck out of the total of things, how soon, ah me! should we have to inquire of high heaven, and of each other, "Where, then, is the wind to come from?" In the name of those contributors to the common weal who do not stand forth as contributors until they are looked for, we may well allow the idiot in the organ-loft to put his pregnant question home to us, and strive to see how deeply laid are the foundations of the Give and Take which goes through every storey of the social edifice.

In some of its aspects the subject is utterly beyond us, so far as detailed appreciation goes. That a martyr at the stake would be all the stronger for knowing that he had the sympathy of "the whole family in heaven and earth" is cer-

tain. But if the martyr, why not the fighter? This is, however, not the *whole* question of the value of moral support. A patriot in a foreign land would probably find his will and his arm all the stronger for knowing that there was sympathy for him in a British heart. But it is decidedly possible, nay surely it is certain, that he might be strengthened by the existence of a sympathy of which he did *not* know—in detail (of course no patriot could exist without a faith which implied sympathy somewhere.) It is totally out of our power to prove that an excited human being in this hemisphere cannot produce a distinct "physical" effect upon another human being in *that* hemisphere. Nay, we must go farther than that. Shall a ray of light be travelling six thousand years from a star whose distance cannot be expressed in printable figures, and reach us at last, and shall a shiver of nerve tissue have no power of transmitting an appropriate effect? It not only may, it must. It is as certain as that some absurdly infinitesimal portion of the gas into which the body of Cheops was dispersed, enters into the composition of my body and yours. So that it is reckoning without one's host to say that a human being does not radiate moral sentiment. He does, he must; it is strictly *conceivable* that the fact should be reducible to a physical formula; and certain that this radiation enters into the every-day give and take of life, whether we speak of it as spiritual influence or as electricity.

The tremendous idea which we have now confronted is one which must even be pushed farther still. We cannot stop, on *this* line of thought, until we come to see that

"—so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God;"

and we must be very base indeed, if we do not take up from the idea a lesson of humility and a lesson of industry. Humility, because we cannot tell how much of our best has been contributed by others—in earth, or in heaven—by strugglers like ourselves, by happier spirits who do *not* struggle as we do, whether angels or men. Industry, because if the unseen, unknown good that is in others may help us, then our own honest efforts may assist *them*.

It is not possible for a man to go on at all, if he shuts out from his mind the idea that he is helped by more sympathy than he sees. Of course this remark will not appeal to those who hardly know (if, indeed, there be any such people in the world) what it is to struggle at all—upon whom no terrors, whether of sorrow or of sin, have ever come down with threats that summon to a fight for life. But this particular view of the subject would alone fill a volume; and I will only make one or two remarks upon one very small portion of it. In the "In Memoriam," the bereaved mourner expressly invokes the sympathy of the departed friend who stands upon the mount of vision and sees further than he did when down upon these table-lands, to aid him in surmounting that sort of contempt for average human nature, which is the shadow of culture unchristianised. The passage is well known:—

"Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of later spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die."

Of course, the appeal for sympathy is inferentially a disproof of the truthfulness of the mood from which it is the recoil. It is an instinctive assertion that give and take is the law of life. If the mourner had not appealed to his friend translated he would have had to appeal to somebody on earth, or else he would have been destroyed. Scorn must have this recoil, or kill the character. Sometimes the recoil assumes a still stronger shape, and the nature which, having been injured by allowing the self-cultivating intellect too much play, has begun so to doubt and despise that it can neither give nor take, nor in any way find its part, is redeemed from the moral disorganisation which might follow by a spasm of the soul which cries with a loud voice for Action! Thus, the overthought student may find himself longing to be a soldier, or a statesman, or even a man of business. Out of the thousands who may read these lines there will be some who will know perfectly well what this means. No man can actually and finally cut himself from the give and take of existence; not in this world, perhaps not in that which is to come; but the nearer his mood approaches to one which points to isolation, the nearer he draws to absolute "nihility."* It is obvious that a creature absolutely without social feeling would be an idiot, infinitely lower in the scale than our friend in the organ-loft. No man can construct for himself an air-pump which shall positively put him *in vacuo*, and leave him

* Simultaneously with the first publication of the present essay, a paper, suggested by the isolated position of a man who had dropped over some part of the Niagara Falls, appeared in the *Spectator*, and worked out, with great fulness and beauty, the very thought of this paragraph.

such an idiot; but whoever, moved by scorn or hate, disturbs the balance of expiration and inspiration in his own moral nature, does something towards the air-pump in question.

There is a poem of modern times, not much read, which deals precisely with that very problem—the "Paracelsus" of Mr Browning. The kind wise counsels of the loving friend Festus, given to the young student, when he is just about to begin his perilous enterprise of self-sustained resolve, strike the key-note of the story, and anticipate the sad close:—

> "Do not cut yourself from human weal!
> You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
> To spend his life in service of his kind
> For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them
> By any tie; nor do so, Aureole!
> *There are strange punishments for such.*"

A terrible line, terribly fulfilled upon Aureolus Paracelsus in that profound poem. Of course, we all know the man is redeemed at last, but he is saved so as by fire, and a more awful warning never was held up by any teacher of men.

It is a very unfortunate thing when the doctrine of the give and take of life, looked at from any place whatever, and whether as fact or duty, is degraded into a sort of *backsheesh*. You know what that means. In the East there is an infamous system of present-giving and present-taking, which turns life into pauperism all round. A great man sends an embassy to you with a gift; he immediately expects that you shall send *him* a gift. Not uncommonly his "give" is a sprat, while his "take" is a mackerel. But *that* particular

meanness is not necessarily contemplated in the *backsheesh* view of human life; all it comes to is, worldliness as to what is beneath the moon; other-worldliness for what is beyond it. So much for so much, and Shylock at the scales on both sides. Now it is perfectly true that so much for so much is the law of life, the divine law that covers everything. But, practically, a good many of those who try to work this law make a sad mess of it. They manage it by taking care that they get a pennyworth for a penny, and leaving those with whom they deal to do the same. In other words, they regard exclusively their own side of the case—the take and not the give. I say they *regard*, for give they must, or perish. In fact, in some way or other their contribution will be had out of them, at some time; the only question for them to consider is, Shall we be cheerful givers, or shall we wait to be squeezed? It is as certain as the rule of three that every human creature who, through defect of his own will, takes out of life at any time, in any way, more than he is prepared to attempt a return for, will eventually be made to cash up. Why not avoid the arrears of interest, and the uncomfortable prison-house, from which he shall in no wise depart till he have paid the uttermost farthing? Ah, my friends, let us rather give full measure, heaped up, running over, in exchange for what we receive, than run the risk of finding scores run up against us! And if we have wronged any, let us restore double; once for what we took that was not ours, and once to mark our sense of having done wrong.

I suppose no one will fancy I have, in this last paragraph, been thinking of such questions of give and take as are de-

cided in the County Courts. The reference is to all kinds of intercommunication, and the design is to kick out, as mean, the *backsheesh* theory, and set up instead, a princely way of looking at things. It is difficult not to look for the natural rewards of expenditure in whatever kind; sometimes it is very, very hard to miss them; but readiness to spend and be spent, *without* ulterior views, is the mood which is demanded of us by the whole construction of things, by every oracle in which the heart of God has been shown to men. It must come to that at last—utter self-renunciation; and God's free gift. This is just the old horn-book teaching, that we must do the best we can for ourselves, and do good to others, but with submission to the supreme Will, as regards results. The experience of the race is uniform upon two points:—that of those who are willing to spend and be spent self-renouncingly, a sufficient number to support human faith and courage to discover that the system of things has, in the plain course of common fact, a secret which turns the give of the good into solid take; and, again, that to all of those who are willing so to spend and be spent is granted a clear, permanent vision of the *existence* of that golden secret in the Divine counsel, whether *they* get into the precise parallel in which it may be working or not.—

And this is enough for faith. It is enough to live by. Less would not suffice, but there is always this sufficiency, and sometimes there is an excess. An excess of reward? No, Mr Backsheesh, you are too fast. There you are again with your sprat. But we were not thinking, on this side the way, of any mackerel whatever. We meant an excess of—

vision; more than enough to get along with; enough to triumph in to-day, and leave something over for to-morrow. It is very hard, we will own to you, not to be able to turn our bank-note into current coin when we want it badly; but still, there *is* our bank-note; we had it in our hands only yesterday, and even if to-day we cannot open our strong-box, (the latch goes stiffly at times—take *that* admission, also, Backsheesh!) we have got the key, and can live on what we know.

It is a question which humility, nay, which common candour, can seldom shirk—whether, if we seem to have found our own career has contained more give than take, it is not, after all, positively, stubbornly, the result of our own inapprehensiveness. If any Backsheesh living should be tempted to refuse mercy to his brother on this principle, he would find his own trust crumble away beneath his feet. Nor need he be unmerciful to himself. But if he is honest and thoughtful, let him entertain the doubt. We have said something about that attitude of contempt for others which, coming of unchristianised self-culture, assumes that they have nothing to give. This is, every way, a blunder—though it is one by the path of which many minds seem as if they were condemned—retributively, or at least by way of discipline—to pass into a truth. Obviously enough, when we despise others, we forget what magical disclosures might come of a change of circumstances. The prince thought himself very superior to the basket-maker; but when the two men were put down upon an island of savages, the basket-maker was the monarch. This is a coarse illustration; but the good-

will of the reader will please to make the best of it. It is a matter of actual frequent experience that we are liable to surprises as to what there is "in" people whom we have imperfectly studied. Some change of circumstance, some sudden opportunity, shows them in a new light, and we discover that they had something to give—perhaps a solid nugget of golden truth in exchange for the nick-nacks of our culture. Now, the question immediately arises, might not a change in the voluntary attitude of our own mind do for us, sometimes, just what a change of external circumstances is found to do? And if so with regard to character, why not with regard to events? May not the root of our misfortunes, if we are unfortunate, lie in our own reception of the things that occur, rather than in the things themselves? This, I repeat, is a candid speculation for our own consciences; not a thing to be thrown at the head of a sufferer. There are, indeed, plenty of cases where the mere suggestion of it would be a most exasperating and brutal mockery.

I do not know how it may be with others, but I have been myself, at different times, puzzled by the directness, and the *in*directness with which the give and take of the world is worked out. It seemed to me, I recollect, rather a brutal thing when I having, as a little boy, written a difficult letter for another boy, who was not my junior, he immediately loaded me with sweetstuff. It showed, perhaps, an impatience on his part to be rid of an obligation which I have since noticed as one of the meanest things going on around me among men and women of the world. There is no "indignity" in "taking gifts," unless they are unworthily made;

still less in receiving a kindness. The "indignity" is in the *backsheesh* way of treating such things. But one would really think, by the way in which some folks put themselves out of breath to "return" a service, or "acknowledge" a present, that a gift of any kind was an insult requiring to be wiped out in a week. The fact must be that these folks are of the *backsheesh* breed themselves. If they give anything they expect something in return directly, and so they think *you* do. It never strikes them there are people in the world who are thankfully in debt to a grace not their own for the power of forgetting gifts made by themselves, as well as insults received from others. But, by the favour of Heaven, such people *are*, and beautiful are their feet upon the mountains of Mammon.

The indirectness of the way in which the give and take of life works out is a puzzle also. You buy sugar of a grocer, but he will not love you, unless you buy tea too. He loses by the sugar. Then why *does* he lose? I am very glad to buy my tea where I buy my sugar, but I do not like to have an illogical reason crammed down my throat for doing so. This is a trifle, and may, if you like, pass for a joke. But it often happens that the give and take are not alike—not wholly so, at all events. Said one boy to another, "Bill, give me a bite of your apple, and I'll show you my chilblains." That is a joke again. But take a serious case. The love we bear to our children is not, cannot be, repaid in degree. No parent but has, at times, had *that* pang—the child does not love me as much as I do the child; it was not intended that he should. Of course, the pang is only mo-

mentary; for we all know, and half the tragedy of life attests for us, that love is *not* necessarily a matter of give and take. It may be poured out like water, and meet no return—no visible return in kind on this side the grave. There is only one pang to compare with this pang—that of not being *able* to return love; and both are so great that they react in eager hope of compensation beyond the stars. But we all feel, I suppose, that we receive from our children abundantly more than we give, though not in love. I, for one, have never talked to mine of gratitude, nor allowed others to do so, if I could prevent it. I keenly remember what I used to suffer, when young, from the talk of vulgar-minded seniors, who thought it "the thing" to hope that "you're a good boy now, I suppose, and very grateful to your parents for what they do for you." I understood as well then as I do now, (and every child does the same, more or less,) that, as Goethe has said, ingratitude is a kind of weakness, for able persons are seldom ungrateful. It was a very offensive sort of *backsheesh* business in my little eyes, and it is so still. A good heart will give gratitude in return for kindness; but what is the use of *claiming* what can never be *enforced?* You can enforce the pretence of it, but not the reality. So I used to read the story of Abounadar the bountiful magician, and the ungrateful boy Abdallah, who stole the candlestick, and the punishment he got; and I was morally dissatisfied with the outcome. It was well to punish him, directly, for the theft, I thought; but what was the good of punishing him for the ingratitude? His own heart was his punishment, for one thing; and the isolation that follows upon odiousness was

the sequel of it. The direct infliction of positive pain by the agency of Abounadar seemed to me a crime. It still so seems to me. It is nonsense to *insist* upon having gratitude. You might as well insist upon being beloved, or admired. It is a bit of *backsheesh* again. Give and take is the divine law of life; but that always means give and receive. In the sphere of mere justice, it may, upon right withheld, be give and snatch. But in the sphere of voluntary beneficence, there must be free will on both sides. To try and compel gratitude is to make a hypocrite: to talk as if it were compellable is an affront to the truth, which can dispense, thank God, with anybody's subterfuges. In intermediate cases, like that of the idiot in the organ-loft—cases where an act of the will can give us as much of our right as we care for, we can do as he did, and say, Shall it be *we?* If the other party says no, we can leave off blowing; he on his part can leave off playing, and find a substitute for the help we decline to render.

IV.—THE HIGHER COURTESIES OF LIFE.

A GOOD deal of what we do and say is regulated, with our acquiescence, by chivalric usages or maxims which have really something to say for themselves, and which are not often challenged. There is, indeed, so much ungentleness in life, that anybody who comes forward to attack, on (suppose) the ground of baseness, something that makes the wheels of affairs go smoothly, is usually packed off with the name and honours of the churl. Existence is already over-fretted for us, and we do not care to inquire too closely if pleasant fictions are founded on fact. So, when a proverb, or a usage, or a common desire to make things pleasant, invites us to be magna-

nimous, we willingly respond, and are ever ready to fight viciously for our more generous "illusions." Only there never is any illusion except for a vanishing interval. All the rules or forms or tacit understandings of chivalric construction are merely an attempt to embody the universal sense that there are elements in life which moral criticism can never overtake. It is not too much to say that magnanimous forbearance in judging others is a form of religion, naturally attached to that "reverence for the Mystery of a Person," without which religion is not possible.

One of the customary chivalries which I have in my mind is that which is embodied in the old saw—*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*—Of the dead speak nothing but what is good. This maxim is, we all know, not universally adhered to, either in public or in private, but very generally it is. It is an old joke to suppose a person walking through a churchyard, reading the epitaphs, and asking where all the bad people are buried.* But sometimes disgust and disapproval pursue the dead with unmuffled voice. I have read that the crowd groaned and yelled at the funeral of Castlereagh; and Harriet Martineau is my authority for the existence in the churchyard of an English village of the following epitaph,—following upon the usual record of name and date of death:—

"He was a Bad Son,
A Bad Husband,
A Bad Father.
'The Wicked shall be turned into Hell.'"

* See to this purpose a pathetic passage in Charles Lamb's beautiful but little-read story of "Rosamond Gray."

There is an example of the same kind, though not nearly so strong, in the churchyard of a London suburb, where I recollect seeing, when a boy, a record, upon a tombstone, of the manner in which a poor woman, with her six children, had been murdered; and the murderer was not spared.

Lapse of time is usually supposed to excuse a freer criticism of the dead than is permitted while the departure is recent—and this even apart from the question of hurting the feelings of relatives. The quickness with which the sacrilege followed upon the death of the poet, seems to have been what chiefly provoked the indignant rebuke contained in Mr Tennyson's lines, "After reading a Life and Letters:"—

"You have miss'd the irreverent doom
Of those that wear the poet's crown:
Hereafter neither knave nor clown
Shall hold their orgies at your tomb:

"For now the poet cannot die,
Nor leave his music as of old,
But round him, *ere he scarce be cold*,
Begins the scandal and the cry;

"'Proclaim the faults he would not show:
Break lock and seal: betray the trust:
Keep nothing sacred: 'tis but just
The many-headed beast should know.'

"Ah, shameless! for he did but sing
A song that pleased us from its worth;
No public life was his on earth,
No blazon'd statesman he, nor king.

"He gave the people of his best:
His worst he kept, his best he gave.
My Shakespeare's curse on clown and knave
Who will not let his ashes rest!

"Who makes it seem more sweet to be
The little life of bank and brier,
The bird that pipes his lone desire,
And dies unheard within his tree,

"Than he that warbles long and loud,
And drops at Glory's temple-gates,
For whom the carrion vulture waits
To tear his heart before the crowd."

But in reality the bottom of the subject is not approached by any of the suggestions which have thus far met us. Death is so saddening a thing, that it makes a space of silence seem natural; yet the truth, properly spoken, *ought* never to be a wrong. It very often is,—but that is because those who listen to it are ignoble. Again, the distinction between the poet as a private man, and the king or statesman as a public man, is trivial. Not long ago died a public functionary, who was known to have been living in utter discordance with the rules of conduct on which the very existence of his functions was based. In other words, he might have been made amenable to himself—if that had been possible. But not a whisper of this had ever escaped, or did, upon his decease, escape into any public channel. On the whole, the maxim, "Say only good of the dead," rests, not upon points of privacy or publicity, or upon anything so disputable, but upon our sense that the dead are not here to answer for themselves and explain (perhaps) what we might too severely condemn; upon an awful feeling that *our* verdict is now superfluous, and might possibly traverse that of the highest Court of all; and not remotely upon a sort of tenderness, or compunction—I was going to

say compassion—which makes us hesitate to speak too critically of fellow-creatures who have suffered already the worst that can happen to what is mortal in a man

Human beings are, however, so intimately knit to each other, that there is a sense in which the whole career of any one of them may be called the property of all the rest. The only thing is, that this possession must be dealt with nobly; or an outrage is committed. And average human nature, distrusting its capacity for dealing nobly with the undefended, has guarded the dead from crude criticism—almost, at times, from criticism at all—by maxims such as the one now before us. Yet there is a way in which the maxim may be read, which may permit those who can trust themselves to the task, to use as a study the experience of those who are gone. The gibbet has lately been busy in this land. I cannot refer without deep emotion to what takes place when the prison-bell begins to toll on the dreadful morning, and I request that the inadequacy of my words may be set down to the account of unwillingness to pile them up, in the mere shadow of such ideas. But what has set me upon this train of thinking, is the fact that the Anglican burial service, with its pathetic words of brotherly confidence, is read while a man like William Palmer * is passing away.

I will not meddle with that subject. Let it stand. But

* I mention Palmer, because he died impenitent, or at least unconfessed. "Lord Campbell summed up for *strychnine*," was his evasive reply to the last appeal: from which it has been supposed that the murdered man was poisoned with antimony. Palmer then asked the chaplain if an unconfessed sinner might hope for pardon. The answer was, "It is not for me to limit the mercy of God,"—and then a quotation from Rev. xxi. 27. Palmer was silent; but his eyes filled with tears.

there is a commonplace about hating sin and loving the sinner, which we can more easily treat with. Of the dead, nothing but what is good—may be read in the light of that commonplace. Let the dead be spoken of only *under shelter* of what is good—as in sanctuary—as in the white light of perfect love—not otherwise. If the worst thing offers itself demanding to be spoken, let it be spoken in the best way, or not at all. Not as with the voice of an alien; or even the voice of an incorruptible judge; but as with the voice of that which judges judges, and thinks the uttermost effort of human "justice" a wretched, poverty-struck attempt, which has nothing but sincerity and usefulness to recommend it, and which must secure, as the condition of that usefulness, the entire absence of all pleasure in the infliction of pain; *in the exercise of power; and in the sense of individual immunity.*

There remains another way of reading the maxim:—Of the dead say nothing, unless you can say what is good. Praise, or silence! Certainly it is always possible to hold one's tongue, and it is a wise thing to do, for those who think the praise which pursues the shade of the departed is unjust. Indeed, the morality of the case lies in small compass. The regret which follows upon loss by death, relaxes with its tender touch those stronger fibres of thought and feeling which are called into play when we do (what we so impudently dare to call) justice. It is impossible, in so dissolved a mood, to speak harshly of those who are gone; or if there be any who *can* do it, it is highly unadvisable that they *should;* for the moral ill of the pain caused to the other

side, would outweigh any good which might be gained by sound criticism.

To pass to another form of customary chivalry. "Give him law!" or "give him a fair start!" or "let him have a run!" are phrases which, used as they are on occasions when people have made up their minds as to somebody's desert, and that he shall have it, give us a rough notion of the half-suspicion of its own accuracy which underlies almost every form of the "sense of justice." The moment a man is caught, trapped, put upon his trial, or about to be sacrificed to what we think right, we experience a movement of compunction. It seems as if we had him at a disadvantage, and were bound to be generous to him. So we give him "law"—give him every chance we can. I have in my mind, while writing this, an old story of lynch law. The lynchers had quite resolved that the lynchee should die; but they said—"Now, we'll give you a hundred yards' start, to run for your life. Once, twice, three times—away!" And off went the poor wretch, like a deer, with the hunters after him. He was caught, and shot, I recollect, and I think he was rightly put to death; but the last "chance" he had gave a rude pathos to the execution.

In ancient Poland, I have read that there was one crime for which, however well ascertained, punishment did not *certainly* follow. The criminal was allowed a "run" for his life—no less a run than four-and-twenty hours' start. A curious instance of the way in which things tend to balance themselves in this world—for of all the inhuman devices ever heard of, the punishment which the man was allowed this

chance of escaping was the most inhuman—I do not mean cruel, (though it was cruel enough,) but contrary to nature, not only in its essence, but in the particular that the criminal's only chance of life was to be found in inflicting the punishment upon himself. This I hold to be inhuman, and utterly unpardonable. For myself, I always sympathise with a prisoner who tries to escape. I have considered that question a thousand times, and am of opinion that English law is unjust in making the attempt to escape a fresh crime. The Japanese, I am glad to see, do nothing of the kind—they punish the gaoler, but do not consider it a crime for a man to defend himself after society has declared war against him. He has done wrong. Very good. Catch him, if you can; keep him, if you can; punish him, if you can. But that he should submit willingly to your efforts to put him to pain is *too* good a joke. When I was a boy, I would never consent to help slower boys with their lessons, but I was always ready to do so with their "impositions." On one occasion I set free, by pronouncing a pass-word, a few scholars who had been "kept in." What is more, and better, the master never complained, but made a favourite of me, and invited me to his house—though I was no pupil of his. In my dealings with my own children I have always acted in the same spirit. *Must* I take the painful step which passes from *discipline* to *punishment?* If so, I shall remember that I put myself in the aboriginal dilemma of force against force, and that I must myself take the chances of war. It does not follow that there are *no* kinds of resistance to punishment which are wrong—there are. And they

are included under the head of—*such modes of action*, applied to the purpose of resistance, *as would, if there were no resistance intended, be of themselves criminal.*

It was my lot while very young to read the "Lady of the Lake" when ill in bed. All the doctor's stuff did not do me the good which I got out of the "law" which Roderick Dhu granted to Fitzjames—

> "As far as Coilantogle ford—
> From thence thy warrant is thy sword!"

How this excited me, and set the slow blood racing again! How often have I used the couplet since, in the great and small conflicts of life, to express my notion of what was due from or to others in cases of opposing interests! "You differ from me, do you? You think my claim unjust? We must fight for it. Be it so! Only let us fight like princes, not like cads. Let us measure off a space of neutral ground, to begin with, part for you and part for me. As far as Coilantogle ford, sir! And then cry havoc, and unleash the dogs!" That is the only mood in which fighting can be begun without a sense of degradation. It is confessing, to start with, that the combatants have something in common which is dearer than "rights;" and the neutral ground will always serve to meet upon, if the bugles cry truce. Let us try, then, never to fight without having first seen our adversary as far as Coilantogle ford. Many a struggle is driven to a deadly close without need, only because that preliminary of noble-spiritedness was not arranged on both sides.

Closely related to this subject is that of the amenities of

controversy in general; but these are regulated by no recognised canons or understood maxims. The nearest approach to either is to be found in a formula which we sometimes see put forward as the basis of organisation—"in things essential, unity; in things indifferent, liberty; and in all things, charity." Now, even in decided conflict, there may be, for both sides, the unity of good intent; and perhaps there is always the right not to be attacked at a disadvantage. I suppose that controversial organisations would be very much surprised if this were drawn out into detailed consequences for them; but I am safe in saying that the best heads and hearts are often tormented by doubts of the generosity of the policy of attack which has been common, and still is common, in the different camps of opinion upon public and other questions. I am not now thinking of civility—courtesy—*cela va sans dire*, and yet there is plenty of room left for wide criticism. I go much further than that. It is not fair to hit a man when he is down. Nor is it fair to deal with a minority as if it were a flourishing majority. If one is attacking an opinion or an institution under circumstances which give it no right of reply, the tone should be very moderate, and, as far as possible, the case of the side attacked should be fairly and forcibly put *for* it. Truth and goodness can never gain by the contrary policy. On the other hand, the same spirit which is unjust or unhandsome in attack, may be, and constantly is, shown in a conceited *impatience* of attack. It seems to me that I am bound to be able to read with perfect good-humour the severest (fair) onslaught upon myself or my opinions. I

can, for my own part, endure, not only with patience, but with keen enjoyment, to hear or read my own cherished convictions attacked. It is by no means *always* that I feel a desire to reply. Nay, however vehement may be my own convictions, I sometimes feel as if it were better for the truth that the other side should speak, and that I should hold my peace. Who am I, and what do I know? Do I hold all hearts in the hollow of my hand? How can I possibly tell what effects may be produced by the thing I disagree with? One thing I do know, in my own intimate experience—namely, that the statements and arguments of those from whom I differ often turn themselves, as they fall, into spears for me to fling back again, if I so choose. And conversely, that I sometimes *un*convince myself when (being in the wrong) I am trying to convince an opponent. Thus I have not the impudence to quarrel with my newspaper or magazine when it says things I do not like. If I had, I should always be in hot water. I take it to be an axiom, that *no thinking man past thirty, who has read diligently in life and books, gets through a hundred lines of human writing without coming to some point of fundamental difference.* I say *fundamental*, quite deliberately, and for this reason:—No writer who is worth reading can go on for a hundred lines of prose or verse, without some one or other of his own private prime postulates turning up; and one is as good as all. *Ex pede Herculem.* One single principle of a man's system—let out either by what he says or by what he does not say—by the mere modulation of a phrase in turning a *meta*physical corner—betrays him. You can construct the

whole intellectual man from that fragment, just as easily as Owen can construct an extinct animal from a bone. Take up, now, the most homogeneous miscellany you please, and you shall find disaccordances. The only difference between A and B is, that A sees them only when they are glaring, while B sees them as they crop up lightly now and then. What then—not to go off our track any farther in search of illustrations,—what would become of us in avowed *controversy*, without some instinct of chivalric allowance to keep us in order?

There is a sort of customary chivalry which has, so far as I am aware, no particular maxim to support it, though it might, and perhaps does at times, find more than one in the New Testament. The world could not carry on its affairs for a day, it is said, if it were not for "gentlemanly constructions," conventional allowances, and many kinds of chivalric hard winking which are better understood than described. Now, that the world *should* carry on its affairs is not the most necessary thing in this universe. The most necessary thing is that the will of God—the right—should be done; and if that involves the staying of the world's affairs, why, they must be stayed. If, then, that process of chivalrous ignoring which goes on all around us is against the will of God, let the world declare itself insolvent to-morrow, but let it have done with "gentlemanly constructions." I do not, however, suppose Havelock would have refused to let a soldier of drunken character fight at Lucknow; or that he would have been slow to acknowledge his bravery if he fought well. He would not have called *that* sanctioning

the man's intemperance; though he would have been glad to see him an honourable member of the temperate band known as Havelock's Saints. That word "sanctioning" is constantly on the lips of good people with weak heads and generally thin natures. It seems to me that it is only the weak folks,—those who are not capable of magnanimity in *other* kinds,—that do not understand magnanimity in *this* kind. I have indeed been struck with (may I call it) the greathearted, fraternal recklessness of *strong* good people. I do not mean recklessness in submitting to intercourse on low terms, but a half-divine unconcernedness which in reality enables them to dictate terms. When I have found the *weak* good people condemn Mr Greatheart (who is pretty sure also to be Mr Greathead) for recognising, on any defined platform of common pursuit, the special qualities of somebody in whom he would have said (if the point had arisen) there was much to be blamed, I have said to the weak people who complained that Mr Greatheart was "sanctioning" the blamable one,—"You must obey your own consciences,—at your peril, then, do it. But mind that your conscience is not sophisticated by love of giving pain, love of power, or love of safety. Let me suppose that this person, from whom Mr Greatheart does not (to your scandal) run away, were, in the course of events, to save your life, or lose a limb in your service. Suppose your town were in a state of siege, and his was the only hand that could defend you,—would you still be so tender of 'sanctioning' him, as you call it. If not, it may be that Mr Greatheart sees deeper than you do into the things which unite, and the things

sever,—how far those join men, how far these part
Let me take an illustration from British law. There
great common law of the land, which is antecedent to
law, both logically and chronologically. This great
n law is the charter of our lives and first liberties. If
n alleges a statutory exception, the burden of proof
ith *him*." But this subject is really far too large to be
ith at any such length as can be afforded under a
heading.

more topic of customary chivalry I will mention here,
y easy one. It has often struck me that now-a-days
are more "protected" by chivalric fictions than they
e, and that they sometimes find the compliments that
d them irksome. I do not wish to say anything chur-
it it really borders upon the burlesquing of gallantry,
a small slender gentlemen giving his arm to a stout,
ong lady,—*across a room*. There is positively no
in walking ten feet along a plane surface, well-
d, with ridges of sofa, and hillocks of ottoman. The
veller is far less likely to fall if she is left alone. I do
in a pretty fiction, but I always feel that the joke is
pushed too far when I see a sweet, but strong and
y creature, who stands well upon her feet, assiduously
up a precipitous ascent of terrific stairs, four inches
n. On the other hand, I like to see a man open a
nd hold it for a lady; and, what is more, I like to see
ose the door after her very softly and tenderly as if he
felt he had parted with something worth regretting. I
o, that a man should always be ready to pick up any-

thing which a lady may have dropped. Of course when a gentleman picks up a glove, or opens a door for a lady, he does not mean to insinuate that she is not physically equal to the task of doing such things for herself. There are two ways of looking at the matter. The man may maintain that he is only masking by acts of graceful homage whatever of superiority or patronage his position as bread-winner may seem to imply. The women may maintain that it is they who are the superiors, and these little services exacted from men are like the pretty nominal tenures one reads of in love-books, such as blowing a horn, or lighting a fire, or bringing a cup of wine,—tenures light and easy, but nevertheless, real acknowledgments of a real seigneury existing somewhere. Be that as it may, there is no denying that a great deal of the function of what was once chivalry is now delegated to the policeman, who sees that Mr Smith's wife is not insulted in the street when she goes shopping, while Mr Smith himself is attending to his business, and earning the money which is to pay the police-rate. It is, however, another illustration of the tendency of things to balance themselves, that a lady in a railway carriage, on soft cushions, and going fifty miles an hour, may be in as much danger of being treated unchivalrously as if she were riding a horse alone over a heath in the days of Jonathan Wild.

There is one little matter in which ladies would do well never to press the privilege which customary chivalry accords to them. "Will any gen'lman ride outside to oblige a lady?" Not wishing to be rude, the gentleman does; obviously, not because he prefers it, else why did he get inside

the omnibus? Now, it is a curious fact that the average human being never knows when he is catching cold, and never knows what made him ill. The gentleman gets a slight chill on the box-seat, or the "knife-board," and, that day six months perhaps, or that day sixteen years, is knocked down by a rheumatic fever, the seeds of which were sown on that little occasion when he rode outside "to oblige a lady." And if there should be several ladies depending on his being well and strong, *they*, poor things, would have to suffer. Ladies should remember that there may be many reasons beside cold and wet for riding inside. A recent ophthalmia, for instance, which may have left no visible trace, is a reason, even in the hottest weather, for not facing the blast of air, (wind in the east perhaps,) which cuts across the face of the outside passenger. One thing remains—the gentleman may get outside, and walk, if he can spare the time and strength. In eight cases out of ten, however, the lady may save him even that inconvenience. An omnibus is apt to be rapidly filled at an intermediate station on its route; but if hailed a short space before it gets there, it is seldom that there is not room for one or two people. If our lady friend, then, will walk a couple of hundred yards to *meet* the omnibus, instead of standing still at a station until it stops, she will probably be able to get inside. If a gentleman should, in consequence, fail to find an inside place, he can do as he likes about going outside—but at all events, he will have missed the compulsion of an illogical custom. Insincere compliances ought always to be unwelcome to a lady, however strong her taste for external homage may be. Why

should anybody care for a husk without a kernel? A youn man was once walking up to a toll-bridge with his sweethear at his side. He put his hand into his pocket for a couple o half-pence,—one for each of the pair. But, looking at th coins, he paused; replaced one of them, and said,—"Yo may as well pay for yourself, Sue; for as like as not I shan' have you after all." That young man's theory of the mone relations of a couple of sweethearts was brutal, but he wa honest in acting up to his light. The light that was in him was darkness; but he was not a fine hypocrite; safer to deal with, perhaps, than Sir Gawain, though not than Si Galahad or Sir Launcelot.

How much the homage paid to women is matter of cu tom, how little heart there is in it, is sometimes painful shown by the manner in which men fail in chivalry to ea other, when the *principle* of the case is the same as if t other party were a woman. Was it not Dangerfield— story belongs, at all events, to the Titus Oates affair— had his eye poked out on the day of his flogging? The p wretch, having been whipped from Tyburn to Newgate, ceiving a stroke of the cat at every gully-hole in the str stopped, according to custom, to take a dram. While was in that horrible, lacerated condition, fevered in mi and body beyond anything that you and I can conceive, "gentleman" began taunting him. He got, of course, horribly brutal answer. He *deserved* severe punishment fo meddling offensively with a helpless man; but no idea o forbearance seems to have crossed the mind of the "gentle-*man*," who ended by thrusting his cane (with design or

without) into Dangerfield's eye. The miserable, insulted culprit died of erysipelas long before his back had begun to heal. Now, who could believe these things if they were not authenticated? One's loathing for Dangerfield, degraded wretch that he was, is absolutely flooded out by pity and burning shame.

Yet you may see the same kind of thing going on almost every day. Napoleon, at St Helena, was once walking with a lady, when a man came up with a load on his back. The lady kept her side of the path, and was ready to assert her precedence of sex; but Napoleon gently waved her on one side, saying, "Respect the burden, madam." You constantly see men and women behave to each other in a way which shows that they do *not* "respect the burden"—whatever the burden is. Sometimes the burden is an actual visible load,—sometimes it is cold and raggedness,—sometimes it is hunger,—sometimes it is grief or illness. If I get into a little conflict (suppose I jostle or am jostled) with a half-clad, hungry-looking fellow in the street on a winter morning, I am surely bound to be lenient in my constructions. I *expect* him to be harsh, rude, loud, unforgiving; and his burden (of privation) entitles him to my indulgence. Again, a man with a bad headache is almost an irresponsible agent, so far as common amenities go;—I am a brute if I quarrel with him for a wry word, or an ungracious act. And how far, pray, are we to push the kind of chivalry which "respects the burden?" As far as the love of God will go with us. A great distance—it is a long way to the foot of the rainbow.

V.—THE ENDS OF LIFE.

UP to the time at which I write (it is neces
be cautious in these rapid days) I beli
one has ever succeeded in producing
dahlia. Supposing some one were to

to know, for I've given my mind to sewers night and day for fifty years." Even supposing the malodorous devotion of this person had brought him profit, the world would praise him, having made up its mind that the study of the sewage question is within the circle of philanthropic labour.

Yet it is not always easy to determine when the energetic pursuit of any of the Ends of Life, common or uncommon, is praiseworthy. There must always remain over, when moral criticism has done its best, a large number of cases in which we can only trust our instincts (as we call them) to decide for us, and a large, perhaps a larger number, in which no decision at all can be come to. It is particularly disagreeable to the ill-trained mind to be told that it cannot "settle" anything; but, after all, it is scarcely possibly to increase knowledge without increasing sorrow; though, to be sure, increase of *mis*knowledge constantly increases self-satisfaction and uncharitable positiveness.

The whole question of the Ends of Life is, in truth, one of extreme difficulty. All the received commonplaces about ambition, wealth, fame, and the rest, break down under the pressure of conscientious analysis. You must read *between* the lines to make sense of them at all; and, even when they have become intelligible, you are stopped in the application of them to individual cases by the total impossibility of seeing into the individual soul. Let us, by degrees, endeavour to make our way through the intricacies of the subject. And let us begin by finding out where the difficulty is. We all know Paley said his great trouble as a teacher at college was to make his class understand the *difficulty* he wished to ex-

plain to them—the solution people take too easily enough, for the most part.

When a railway king has exploded before all the world, there is no scruple, on any hand, in repudiating and condemning him. Nor am I going to rest in the cynical commonplace about success, which is basely false as to its spirit, however plausibly supported. But suppose a commonplace man, with no particular character, to have set himself the task of achieving fortune, and to have succeeded, what have the commonplaces to say to him? Chiefly, that his ambition was an unworthy one, and that quite irrespectively of any use to which he puts the money he has acquired.

But now take a case like that of the late Mr Samuel Budgett of Bristol, who is held up in memoirs as a model man. It is quite plain that he belonged, as far as the ostensible aim of his life was concerned, to the same type as any railway king you like to name. He was a good man, measured by whatever standard is likely to be brought into court; but his specialty was the instinct of *getting*—that desire to possess, and to accumulate, which is the basis of the merchant-character. Supposing our railway king to be honest, there is no *radical* difference between him and Mr Budgett of Bristol. They are both, by instinct and practice, getters and accumulators of material wealth; and the same commonplaces apply to both.

But with what sort of application? When I was a little fellow, a man was going on, in my presence, with these commonplaces, and pouring great contempt on "the wealth and science, and wisdom of the world." I greatly angered him

by saying, "Then, Mr S——, what do you wear that Macintosh for?" Shortly afterwards he showed, with apparent pleasure, some new china which he had been buying. Once more I attacked him, and asked him how he could consistently take pleasure in what came from the Potteries, in which so much of the "wealth and science of this world" was sunk. The end of it was that I was turned out of the room crying, but utterly unable to see what wrong I had done, till an aged connexion of the household, to whom I flew for comfort, said: "My dear, you take people at a nonplush so, and they don't like it." But surely the way to get at the truth upon any subject whatever is to take the question "at a nonplush," if you can. We are all interested in promoting unmercifulness of *that* description, and may as well make this one of our opportunities.

One of the Ends of Life that is talked about with much glibness by people who do not care to see that their words stand for precise ideas, is *ambition*. Usually, I suppose, ambition means love of power. This is a matter upon which I have no sympathetic feeling to guide me; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that there have been, and still are, and (it is said) always will be, men who like to rule—who find their highest pleasure in controlling the wills of others. The instinct of the genuine statesman must be a case in point; and, partly so, the instinct of the conqueror. But the latter is a very complex case, for the soldier may become a conqueror by the mere force of circumstances, without making conquest (of territory) his aim. The taste for statesmanship, too, may be a very different thing, as it exists in differ-

ent natures. We all remember the passage in "In Memoriam," in which the singer expresses his certainty that his friend would have chosen for himself the career of the statesman—"a life in civic action warm." But nobody supposes that the motives of Arthur Hallam would have been the same as those of Bonaparte, or even those of Pitt, Walpole, or Warren Hastings. The items that would go to make up the character of the model statesman are not difficult of enumeration:—the love of "combinations;" knowledge of human nature; delight in human sympathy; the desire to employ the knowledge and catch the delight by dealing with masses rather than individuals; physical and moral courage; a fine conscience; a kind heart; a vivid will; a persuasive wit, and so forth. A man with these characteristics will naturally gravitate towards statesmanship as a *carrière;* and any design that, in that consequence, he takes deeply to heart, will become to him an End of Life. It is quite clear that he may (conceivably) exercise his natural function without having the love of power at all—except as a means of doing good. It is also conceivable that the love of dealing with masses of human interests may carry into statesmanship men who have neither love of power in any selfish sense, nor yet love of doing good. There are people who take to politics just as others take to farming, or pigeon-fancying, and who are, in so doing, neither moral nor immoral, so far as the spirit is concerned in which they act.

In the same way,—to go back for a moment, *not* without a logical purpose,—there are men who take to mercantile

pursuits with as little "motive" as others take to cultivating tulips: they like active social intercourse; they enjoy the cross-play of brain which is necessary in the exchange of commodities; and they find an instinctive pleasure in *getting*—even though they spend directly what they gain. I have known several men who have been great gainers and great spendthrifts at the same time. I have in my eye, while writing these lines, a gentleman whose genius for exchange might have made a Baring or a Rothschild of him, if he had not spent fortunes as fast as he made them. Then, again, he makes them as fast as he spends them—he does it instinctively, just as a beaver will build up its dam as often as you knock it down. The winning of the money is, in and for itself, an end, without the least regard to keeping it or getting rid of it.*

The question of love of power, pure and simple, is not for me an easy one. Certainly it exists: it is one of the most powerful of common motives; and, where it is exercised to the injury of others, there is no difficulty felt about condemning it. But, no doubt, persons exist who feel as blind, as amoral a pleasure, in controlling the conduct of their fellow-creatures, as a squirrel in turning his wheel, or a magpie in hiding a spoon. All that can be said about such cases is, that the pleasure is a dangerous one, and needs more, not less, than some others, to be enjoyed in the light of conscience, because it bears directly and immediately on one's relations with other people.

* On the other hand (one may notice by the way) there are men who are very careful in keeping money who have no tact in getting it.

Strictly speaking, there is *no* object of human pursuit which can be made absolutely *un*moral. I do not want to fall into trivialties of illustration, but there is no use in a principle which will not bear extreme weights, and survive being "taken at a nonplush." Supposing, then, that a man could produce a blue dahlia in absolute isolation from all other human ends and interests, he could not escape the law which, sooner or later, takes up everything into the sphere of right or wrong. His blue dahlia would produce some result, in which some human being would be concerned at some time. We all know what the little desert flower said to Mungo Park, whose eyes were perhaps the first and the last that ever beheld it. But we can push the matter beyond even the blue dahlia. Call up in imagination the intentness of labour with which the prehistoric savage whittled away at his flint arrowhead, or stone necklace, the production of the proper article being to him as much an ideal as the dome of St Peter's to Michael Angelo, Fonthill to Beckford, or the suppression of Bornese piracy to Rajah Brooke. And then remember how the poor, silly, "unmoral" arrow-head turns up to-day, and finds itself mingled with the highest and the deepest of human thoughts and feelings. One need not push this: obviously the most indifferent tail in one of Cuyp's cows might have remote threads of moral relation.

Looking at the subject broadly, we may be content with saying that the purposes of God are worked out by every individual human creature following his special bent, under two limitations:—(1,) He must not permit his own ardours

to make him unsubmissive to such disappointments as, coming after he has done his best, must be treated by him as discipline; and (2,) he must not deprive others of their rights. These are positive, primordial limitations, without which no pursuit can be called *innocent*. That is all. But, of course, it is an *ignoble* life which is wholly taken up with energetic effort for which nothing more can be said than that it is just beyond the pale of damnatory criticism. There is a vast difference between the man who gives his days and nights to blue dahlias, and the man who gives his days and nights to seeking a cure for consumption. The blue-dahlia man must be tolerated, not only because we have no right to interfere with the thing that does not hurt us—no right to try to compel a fellow-creature to our ideal of goodness—but for another reason, which may be thus stated: The displeasure excited in our minds by the blue-dahlia man comes of our seeing that he has not sufficient intensity of nature to place him in voluntary harmony with the *morale* which interpenetrates all things, whether we will or no. If we interfere by compulsion, we not only cannot tell what injury we shall do in so violating an elementary postulate of duty, but also we may (and sometimes do) cross the track of the laws by which that *morale* works out its own ends without consulting us. God, in His heaven, says—"All shall be moral, and your folly, as well as your wrath, shall praise Me." And so it befalls. Alchemy, then Chemistry. But there is more behind. For who knows what object of pursuit is trivial, and what is not? The production of a blue dahlia, or a pigeon that can be drawn through a wedding-ring, or a pictorial history

of the world in tent-stitch? Very likely. But what would have been the consequence, if it had been in the power of parents, teachers, rulers, and popular sentiment to enforce its frequent command—*Put away that nonsense, and do something useful?* How many young people have been told by their parents that prose, and poetry, and painting, and mathematics were nonsense, and bidden to put away the book, the pen, the pencil, and yet have afterwards become kings of thought and benefactors in art! How many great discoverers have been scouted for the uselessness of their pursuits! How many martyrs, prophets, sages, philanthropists, have had the ends for which they lived treated as if those ends were of as little account as a blue dahlia!

So, then, we perceive that the human race would be an infinite loser if it could forcibly put down all strenuous effort of which it did not see the value—an infinite loser of direct, ponderable, estimable, practical results. But is that all? By no means; it would lose in another way: for (besides that all wrong-doing injures the wrong-doer) unjust compulsion is destructive of moral power in the compelled, whatever may be the point to which the compulsion is directed. It is a form of murder.

Let us call to mind the story of Bernard Palissy, the Huguenot potter; his struggles, for many, many years of poverty and sorrow, to discover the enamel. We know he made furnace-fuel of the chairs, the tables, the house-flooring. Domestic trouble did not stop him: his children died, (six of them;) his wife complained and scolded; the neighbours abused him. His trade he pursued only by

fits and starts, when the needs of the home compelled him; he sweated at his furnace till the garters used to slide off his dwindled legs. All men condemned him, and tried to make him give up. It is the way of the world, always. But, in spite of what people say with their tongues, in spite of the gossip of society, men and women cannot help having, at the bottoms of their souls, a little spark of sympathy with heroic effort. The meanest of them may be, at times, quickened into a suspicion that there is more in the case than they quite see. Whatever wrong there was in the noble persistence of Job, the *wrath* of God was kindled, not against him, but against the friends who had misunderstood and slandered him—as well as impeached, by the implications of their blunders, the whole spirit of the Divine policy. Human beings mostly stop at talk in cases of unintelligible heroism—and Palissy went on with his furnace-work. "My credit was taken away from me, and I was regarded as a madman. Under these scandals I pined away, and slipped with bowed head through the streets, like a man put to shame. I was in debt in several places, and had two children at nurse, unable to pay the nurses. Men said, 'It is right for him to die of hunger, seeing he left off following his trade.' But when I had dwelt with my regrets a little, because there was no one who had pity upon me, I said to my soul, 'Wherefore art thou saddened? Labour now, and the defamers will live to be ashamed.'" . . . And so the marvellous story ran on from year to year, till Palissy won, and the defamers were at least silenced by the successes in which the struggle ended. But many of us have paused on

the dreadful crisis of the narrative, to ask, Was Palissy right, to go on at such a cost?

The large majority of readers have probably stifled the question: many of them being reconciled to the story of the struggle by the splendour of the success; and many more by the constancy and courage of the Christian martyr in the sequel of his troubled life.

First, about the success. It did not, of course, alter the moral quality of what went before. But the fact that "the passionate patience of genius" *does* so often meet its reward, even in this life, must be taken as God's "answer out of the whirlwind" that there is in that passionate patience an element which He approves. The success which sometimes follows the passionate patience of the genius which is crime, may have in it the same accent of approval *for that element*, while it may become the means of chastisement, too.

What, then, is that element?

The answer lies near at hand. That element is the last analysis of conscience. It is the very pinnacle upon which every human soul meets, or some day *must* meet, God. Christianised, it makes the Christian martyr. In any case it makes the martyr, or the hero. It is the "point of honour" kindled in the fire of eternal ideas to a peak that lays its shining spire close under the very footstool of the Throne. Though it is I *will* towards men, it is I *must* towards Heaven. It is that last obedience of the soul which the world cannot but call defiance. It is the battle of the human spirit to redeem its hostages of self-denial, saying as

it struggles and bleeds, "Father of souls! You have so made me that the integrity of my very being stands impawned upon honourable persistence in this effort—not on success, for that, O Father, is in Your choice—but in keeping, so far as my will is concerned, the line of march, the orbit of movement, upon which Your forming hand first set me."

It is so difficult for any outsider to judge positively when a man's soul can and does find itself in such a position with regard to any of the ends of life, that criticism is idle. It seemed very obvious, no doubt, for the friends of Palissy to say to him, "Go back to your trade, make your home comfortable, and give up the enamel." But Palissy might have replied, "You speak in the dark. My design has become impacted into my very soul. To give it up would be such moral disorganisation to me that I *could* not work at my trade,—or exist at all, in fact. If Heaven, by any extraneous action, snatches the thread of my labour out of my hand, I shall know it, and shall resign myself; but if I give up whilst I have a hope of success, I am a coward—I sink—I perish—I die,—and it is idle to talk of working to a man who is dead." It is, no doubt, very difficult to get the average human being to understand this. The majority of people have no points of honour, and, indeed, no conscience, except towards persons. Enthusiasm they do not understand — though they are ready enough to take the benefit of anything that enthusiasm does for them. How many years did Collingwood spend at sea, without seeing his wife and family? The world applauded, and called that duty; but there was no reason whatever, except that enthu-

siasm of loyal courage which is the highest quality of a fighting-man, against Collingwood handing over his sword to another, and coming home. Who shall judge him? Who shall judge Palissy? Who shall judge even poor Haydon, the painter, a much less man (probably) than either the Huguenot potter or the British admiral?

Nobody can possibly determine for another which out of all possible ends of life shall be to him his innermost point of honour, or how he shall deal with it. Let us, for a moment, use an illustration from a much lower class of facts. If a pugilist became convinced, in the middle of a fight, that it was wrong to go on, he would be bound to stop at once. But, supposing him *not* convinced, he would be a coward to give in till he was compelled, and if he did so, must lose his self-respect and become morally degraded. I have written thus far upon the principle of making every illustration advance the argument by a step, and have not used the last example in vain. Why do we not accord the same honours to the prize-fighter as to the heroic soldier? Because the former, taking up his position gratuitously, injures another as well as runs his own risk, for gain and for applause. The test by which we judge of the quality of a man's enthusiasm in ordinary cases may help us in cases less common:—Is the end held dear by him for its own sake, or for some purpose of personal enjoyment which he might, conceivably, secure by aiming at some other end? and again, Are the means by which he pursues his end such as, in themselves, under any conditions, must injure other people? If Palissy had aimed, *through* the enamel, at wealth and title for him-

self, or been *careless* of others in following out that aim, we should have had no difficulty in pronouncing him base. But it was not so. His enthusiasm was the enthusiasm of the artist, of the lover of the perfect in every form; what injury (if any) accrued, from his efforts, to others, was incident to the pursuit under unhappy circumstances, and not essential to it; and, lastly, since his moral integrity was bound up in persistence, he would have done them no less an injury than that of incapacitating and destroying himself if he had relinquished his struggles. It does not follow that any man should part with his freedom of will as to pausing in any pursuit whatever — that is madness, and may be crime. When the unhappy prince is confronted by the messenger from the other world, beckoning him on, he shakes off his interfering friends, as poor Palissy did.

> "Unhand me, gentlemen!
> By heav'n, I'll make a corpse of him that lets me!
> Lead on—I'll follow thee!"

And he follows. But yet, when he thinks he has gone as far as is wise, he challenges the ghostly fate to declare his message—

> "Speak now—I'll go no farther"—

and his conduct, if it could be translated into a formula, would make the exact rule for every case in which personal enthusiasms seem to conflict with other things over which conscience claims to have authority. But outsiders must always lack one necessary element for dealing with such

difficulties—*the ghost will not speak to them, but only to him to whom it is sent.*

Thus, we have, in reality, travelled over the subject. To make anything whatever an end of life at the cost of the *rights* of others is morally wrong. To do so merely for personal pleasure is ignoble, though it may not be criminal. To do so without submission to the Divine will is profane. To do so when others cannot see anything good in the end, may often be the most sacred of duties, and a most imperative call for self-sacrifice. It is no man's right to judge Ulysses when he leaves Telemachus to do "his work," and, bidding his men "smite the sounding furrows," is off and away again into the sunset sea. Palissy the potter was Palissy the martyr, too; and the world cannot yet dispense, for *its* ends, with the

> "Equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

At the risk of saying over again, in another shape, what has been already said, I must add a word about that kind and degree of success which, under the name of Respectability, is now made, especially in books for adolescent reading, such an overshadowing End of Life. To the average mind, respectability will long continue to be a *symbol* of worth, and the cases where the two things are disjoined will be held exceptional. So long as respectability keeps its place in the mind as a symbol only, it may, for default of a better, be an End of Life with the multitude—subject to the same limitations as any other. In point of fact it *is* such an

end with the enormous majority of our fellow-creatures; and to it is sacrificed quite as much as any artist in the world ever sacrificed to his enamel or other ideal. Daily we see it prove too strong for charity, for principle, for natural affection—which surely indicates that the sign has slipped away from the thing signified a little. The question then is, Cannot we dispense with a literature for boys which, making great pretensions to purity and even piety of tone, introduces them to the Cardinal Virtues—as caryatides to a dome of stuccoed respectability, all holding trays full of visiting-cards, and all carrying cheque-books?

VI.—THE ENFORCED PAUSES OF LIFE.

IT seems that in old Scandinavia there were trolls, or lubber dwarfs, who were always busy; who *never* knew what it was to repose. A country fellow—as I remember the story, which I quote upon the strength of a child's recollection—employed one of these trolls to assist him in stealing a quantity of wheat from another countryman's barn. "Take a little more, Mr Troll, take a little more," says the thief, "by and by you shall have some rest." So the troll takes a little more, saying, however, "Rest, rest! What is rest?" Off they go, the pair of them, carrying heavy loads of the stolen goods. When they are at a safe distance from the scene

of their theft, they sit down for a rest. "Oh," says the mouse, "if I had only known how good rest is, I would have brought away the entire barn!"

Most of us know how good rest is, and are ready enough to take it, though not always when we need it: on the other hand, it is sometimes forced upon us in a way that teaches more than one lesson. We find, in the compelled pauses of our lives, that the world can do without us, and that it is a good thing to be occasionally cut off from it. How nice it is to *let* alone; how nice to *be* let alone!

Nearly all forms of travelling give us some degree of this kind of feeling. Not, of course, riding in an omnibus, for there is no telling whom you may meet in it; but in some degree riding in a cab, and in a considerable degree, riding on the railway for any distance. In a cab you may lean back so that nobody can see you; and you may shut your eyes upon the hard faces, and squalid dresses, and filthy gutters, and frowsy corners of the streets. Nobody is likely to stop the carriage,—and nobody *can* stop a train! So that, unless you have unpleasant fellow-travellers, you are comfortably shut up from the rest of the world, with a delicious sensation that there is no drawbridge. It is an old remark that, from a similar point of view, a sea-voyage is delightful. Nobody can knock at the door. If you are ill, nobody can look in, to condole; and how delightful *that* is sometimes—to escape being reminded that you are not well! On the other hand, you have your own delicious incapacities. You cannot knock at anybody else's door. If something nasty occurs to you, you cannot write it, and

post it to a friend—who would be vexed by it. A masterly inactivity is forced upon you. Your whole being lies fallow. Ceasing to plague and to be plagued; knowing that the great world gets on without your fretting and fuming about it; and yet retaining a keen sense of your own vitality,—oh, it must be a pleasant situation. A keen sense of your own vitality you *must* have, for the mind puts forth an immense fresh elasticity of power in the presence of vast suggestive spaces, and magnificent sights and sounds, such as are round it on the great deep: and yet there is rest, and a triumphant immunity.

The forced repose which accompanies very severe illness, or confinement to the house on a wet day, or the recovery from a swoon, brings with it something of the same soothing effect. In the midst of a heavy personal trouble, or a serious enterprise, which seems to demand the most strenuous effort on your own part, you are suddenly stricken with illness. The oars drop from your hands, and the boat—does it stop? No, thank God, it pulls through, it gets safely past the rapids, and you have to reflect, amid the fretfulness of returning health, what a useless, unimportant fellow you are. Or again. For days past you have been earnestly working your affairs up to a certain point for a certain day, "sharp." Perhaps you have even fixed the hour at which a particular iron shall be hot, and shall be struck by your energetic hand. On that day it comes on to rain, thunder, and lighten so furiously, that all the world stays indoors, and you, not being quite well, feel that you must. The next day, you go out with the intention of

taking up the broken thread and working it into your scheme, but find that the course of events has superseded your ingenious activity, and your efforts are not required. Not unfrequently the new turn which things have taken is felicitous, but let it be clearly understood that this does not condemn your activity, or show that it could have been spared. It may not *appear* to have any connexion with the result, but you and I do not know quite everything, and there may be a real though invisible connexion between things the most remote.

Taking care not to draw the false moral from anything of this kind that happens in our lives, we may yet draw the right one. How much have we all suffered, as some French epigrammatist says, in rhyme, from evils that never occurred! How exaggerated are some of our strivings! Napoleon, as we have all read, used to leave his letters unopened for days, and then find with cynical joy, on breaking their seals at last, that the majority had answered themselves. Of course this might and would happen in more ways than one. For instance, the poor sick man's letter, begging the loan of a sovereign to buy food with, has clearly answered itself, if at the end of a week you find the sick man is dead and are quite sure the widow will not come to ask you for a sovereign towards the funeral expenses. But, in the majority of the instances in which the letters no longer want answering, it is pretty certainly because the writers were over-urgent about things which have arranged themselves without interference. The fact is, we get upon inclined planes in our little affairs, and become heated with the "wind of

our own speed," and then of course we exaggerate the consequence of our own efforts, and of what others can do for us. But we must not allow this sort of reflection upon life to suggest the foolish and wicked paradox that indifference stands as good a chance as energy. Nobody who loves the truth ever pushes this suggestion beyond a joke. Drunkards and fools do escape strange pitfalls, and do fall into the laps of easy fortunes: but the very surprise the thing occasions is enough to indicate its place in the classification of events.

Nobody can have less sympathy with the Sabbatarian martinet than I have; but scarcely anything in life is so sweet to me as the repose of Sunday—the soothing suggestions of its devouter offices, its silence, its calm, its immunities. Defoe, when he was in difficulties, was called the Sunday gentleman, because he only went abroad upon the day on which bailiffs had no power; but others, not in difficulties, may be permitted to rejoice in the certainty of being let alone on Sundays. For my part, I have never, since I can recollect at all, awoke on a Sunday morning without a sense of triumph in the quiet hours that were before me. Sunday was always the day on which I rose early, in order to have as much as possible of its peace and sweetness. It is still the same with me. No postman comes to-day, with his irritating double knock. No tradesman rings the bell for orders. No carts go clattering through the streets. Even the doctor seems to find less to do. And now, in these soft, unfretted moments, causes of irritation seem less than they did yesterday: we pause

upon the momentous step: the bent bow of half-angry energy is relaxed: the mist of passion has time to thin away a little: we come to the end of the gentle day with a pang, and go to bed with a regretful thought that to-morrow is Monday. I say *we*, feeling sure that my own experience cannot be solitary—but it *is* mine, and much more keenly mine than the pen can tell you.

The influence of an enforced pause in clearing the mind may be of the most beneficent kind. How often does it happen that we fail to see because we look too hard. We *look at* the picture, or the landscape; we attack it, so to speak, with our eyes; and we miss the beauty of it. But another day, when we are a little relaxed in our will, the landscape or the picture is permitted to look at us, and the calm receptivity of a languor, enforced it may be by illness, takes in the loveliness we missed when we were at pains to see. These things indeed are commonplaces of human experience, and to speak of them is not to teach, but to recite what is known.

Not less familiar, and not less interesting as a topic of meditation, is the importance of placing a solid block of oblivion, if possible, between any great shock of pain or disappointment, and our next effort. True or not, that is a good story which relates how some one, suddenly overthrown and baffled in his career, told his valet to give him forty drops of laudanum, and let him sleep till he awoke of his own accord. That sounds very like suicide; but the truth is, if short enforced pauses could always be secured, the temptation to suicide would be removed. Believe it who

pleases, I do not believe that the science of anæsthetics is even in its infancy, as yet. Not opium nor chloroform, not poppies nor mandragora, not drowsy syrups; but something, something has yet to be won from the secrets of the borderland upon which Psychology and Physiology knock their heads together in the twilight. It is, doubtless, a most shy and recondite something. The mesmerist, the hypnotist, and the magician have not hit it. Nor did that celebrated gentleman, an Indian officer I think, who had acquired the knack of stopping the beating of his own heart, and at last performed the experiment once too often. But when, upon my pronouncing the exquisite word *anodyne*, some rude fellow speaks of ether on lump-sugar, or an opium pill, I own I feel a little insulted. I did once begin a recipe—*Take equal quantities of rippling water, true love, falling rose-leaves, firm faith, sweet music, swan's down*—ah! I shall never finish it till some enforced pause in my affairs gives me the requisite leisure. But that so beautiful a word as *anodyne* must have an equivalent in fact and nature, is so highly probable that one cannot easily relinquish all hope of finding it. Can it lie concealed in the crypt which hides the squared circle, the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life? There *was* a charm—but Merlin told it to Vivien in Broceliande! There *was* a charm—but it was a charm to waken, and not to soothe; so she awoke, and went across the hills with Him, leaving the story of her slumber to fascinate the sweet poet:—

> "Well, were it not a pleasant thing
> To fall asleep with all one's friends;

To pass with all our social ties
  To silence from the paths of men;
And every hundred years to rise,
  And leave the world, and sleep again,
To sleep thro' terms of mighty wars,
  And wake on science grown to more,
On secrets of the brain, the stars,
  As wild as aught of fairy-lore;
And all that else the years will show,
  The Poet-forms of stronger hours,
The vast Republics that may grow,
  The Federations and the Powers; . . .
So sleeping, so aroused from sleep
  Thro' sunny decads new and strange,
Or gay quinquenniads, we would reap
  The flower and quintessence of change."

But there is a too-daring luxury in all this! There is an excess of certainty about it; and yet a terror of uncertainty. As for me, I should never sleep if I knew I was wound up, like an alarum, to wake at a given time. On the other hand, there might be a mistake: the prince might never find his way to the palace. No: my anodyne must be something far simpler. It must be uncertain in the duration of its effects, but it must not last longer than while one might stay in an easy chair, or in bed, with decency, and without exciting the coroner to hold an inquest. As for sleeping a century, or a "gay quinquenniad"—it seems absurd to go to bed for that: one ought to have a proper vault in a cemetery. Let us, as Sydney Smith said, take short views. Nathaniel Hawthorne maintained that what the world at present needed was a nap; and that moderate expression just hits off the purpose for which I want somebody to discover an anodyne. In the meanwhile, I am not always thankful to those who, in their anxiety to "save time," are skilful in

shortening the enforced pauses of life. I am by no means always desirous to make a journey short; on the contrary, I often wish it to last as long as possible; and as for Sunday —if anybody could succeed in turning the one which will dawn to-morrow into a sabbatic year, I should thank him with every pulse of my being.

VII.—THE TABLE-LANDS OF LIFE.

I DO not know,—because Hoffman, in his tale of "The Golden Jar," has not thought proper to say,—whether or not the fruit-stall of the Bronzed Applewoman, which the student Anselmus knocked over in his haste, had upon it any such pears as I have now before me*—rough, knobby, unsymmetrical-looking, uninviting. A friend urged me to write an essay on Winter Pears; of course I knew what he wanted, but I had never set eyes on the fruit. Now when Mr Micawber (I am *not* about to digress) thought of entering into the Medway coal trade, it seemed to Mrs Micawber that the first thing Mr

* No, stupid! It was on Ascension-Day, wasn't it?—P.D.

would bear a good deal more seasoning.

It was not to be supposed that such a useful sy: late-ripening fruit would, any more than a Glaston or a century-aloe, escape the manipulation of the Accordingly, many essayists have made capital out Pears. One says—Do not be misled by external great latent capacity of sweetness may exist beneat outside. And another—Do not be misled by prec fruit which ripens latest keeps the best. And so the whole circle of moral commonplaces, wherever t can be made to touch it. Well, let us, for our pa avoid being misled by anything whatever,—by (fo riding an analogy to death; and let us, at the same what we can get out of Winter Pears. I retain thi out of respect for the memory of my friend, (who i more,) but it is easy to see that the whole subj table-lands and pinnacles of life must be touched there.

Not much, surely, need be said about the first a

rude, shaggy natures, is very often a symptom of culture overdone, and almost lapsed into sickliness—a symptom not unhopeful, for it is a natural turning to what is tonically alterative. But not only is perfect strength as smooth as the O of Giotto; for it remains to be added that the leaning of Christian ethics has always been to that type of character which grows up, through tenderness, into strength. The reason is obvious; force *may* be partaking the life of others; but tenderness *must*. It seems to be easier to raise the gentle soul to energy than to break the strong into submission. Thus, in so far as the winter pear stands for the hard fibrous character that will endure plenty of wear and tear before it mellows from the centre throughout, it has no exclusive lesson for us. Such a character, however, may not only be *of* the noblest; it may have, besides, a wonderful fascination of its own—when once we are sure of its precise *differentia*. Goodness with crude manners is, in fact, like a coquette; or a beautiful river that dives into dark caves and reappears; or a star with two faces; or an instrument that plays sweet and angry tunes by turns. Over the outsider it exercises all the power that lies in mystery,—until, in close intercourse, the outsider has caught at the law of its moods: and even then, the double play of soul,—each holding its best resources in the leash, and each luxuriously suspecting the other,—is, I suppose, about the most voluptuous thing in the whole experience of sentiment. Hence, I observe women who write stories delight in sketching such characters and such situations as I have in my eye. Unless, too, I am

very much mistaken, single women do so more than married women—upon which much might be said.

The question between precocity and late maturity is not so simple. It is one upon which almost everybody has his own private induction; and there are very few people who have the philosophy, or the candour, to recollect that an instance more may make all the difference to the conclusion. But who can be sure that he is at the end of the facts? The *instantia crucis* may turn up to-morrow, for what a man knows. Yet the popular mind, as we all know, is so fond of "something definite" that, even in the very attempt to correct its own conscious errors, it will rather run away into positive paradox than hold itself in equilibrium till it has a chance of making its crucial experiment. If it were not so, the subject of mental and moral precocity (if we must needs accept that word) would have met different treatment. Once having set up the word *precocious* on the one hand and the word *morbid* on the other, you may, of course, play any tricks you please with them—so long as you do not trouble yourself about precise definitions: but no longer. There is no valid excuse whatever—absolutely none—for saying that early activity of the mind and heart is a bad thing, or is a prognostic of any one kind of disease or decay. No valid excuse, I say, in the lives of the great and good; and no assignable physiological or psychological reason why it should be so. All *forcing* is bad;* but what is forcing? It is,

* Bad, speaking absolutely; but it may sometimes be a necessary evil, and, in a manner, be assistant to the total growth. Two years after the publication

surely, spurring the energies until exhaustion sets in. We want no ghost to tell us that *that* must be mischievous; the thing is obvious. But if any ghost (of an overwrought victim, say) comes from the dead to assert that spontaneous activity, however early, is necessarily "morbid," I say he is not "an honest ghost," like our old friend of Elsinore. The instances of precocious genius or energy (I again say that I use that vague adjective under protest) which has afterwards verified its own promise are, to say the very least, *as* numerous as the instances of the contrary; or, to be more exact, as the instances which are popularly liable to be set on the other side of the account. The fact is, the best minds have many maturities,—a point which we shall approach more closely in a minute or two. Milton was "precocious;" and yet he sat down to "Paradise Lost" at fifty. Whether Shakespeare was precocious or not, we have no means of knowing,—in spite of Aubrey's nonsense about calf-killing, which is adopted by Guizot. The present Bishop of St David's is not young; is not, so far as I know, unhealthy; and has, certainly, some repute as a scholar and historian. Well, I have in my possession a book of his, published when he was eleven years old, from which it appears that he read Greek when he was four. Sir Walter Scott began his career as a novelist at forty. Was he a precocious boy? They say not; but who are "they," and what

of this paper the question of Precocity has been intelligently discussed in the *Saturday Review*: and then in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, by another writer who supplements, not to say corrects, the first. I agree with the latter writer, except that I do not at all see that poets are generally less precocious or less full of promise (he distinguishes between precocity and promise) than other people.

do "they" know about it? I have my eye at this moment upon a little boy who is the very torment of his schoolmasters, because he does not "learn" his lessons. If he should distinguish himself in after-life, *here's* a fact against precocity in youth! But, for all that, the boy *is* precocious; for the reason why he does not "learn" is that the extreme facility with which he can do it makes it irksome to him. I might greatly extend this sort of comment, but forbear—only adding a word of caution about *kinds* of precocity. Let me suppose—and I have, again, my eye upon an actual case—let me suppose it said in the biography of an artist—"In his boyhood he was chiefly distinguished among his playmates by the accuracy with which he could, with a common pebble just picked up, hit a sparrow on the wing." Now here, says the popular mind, there was no artistic precocity. I beg your pardon, but there was. The power of hitting a sparrow on the wing would not make a painter, but the quality which is essential to such a feat is, in a high degree, essential to the painter's work; namely, the power of firmly transfixing an object with the eye, and accurately seizing its relative position—*i.e.*, its *perspective*.

But to pass on, and still to keep, for the present, on the outskirts of this question of maturity. A modern novelist has said that all the great things have been done by the young. He spoke chiefly of men of action, and made out a long list of *instantiæ convenientes*. Taking for granted, as "common sense" would permit him to do, the *absentiæ in proximo*, he passed on to his *instantiæ secundum magis et minus*. So he made out his case by induction. Only he

forgot Cromwell and Mohammed.* Turning from action to thought, (admitting, of course, that the distinction is not absolute,) the case is not less doubtful. When was the maturity of Coleridge? Was it in his *annus mirabilis* of twenty-six, which produced to him the "Ancient Mariner," and the first part of "Christabel," or was it later, when he threw off the prose works to which we can almost, if not wholly, trace the existence of the "Broad Church" movement, to say nothing of Young Englandism? When was the maturity of John Hunter, who began to study anatomy at the age when most men begin to think of counting up their money? When was the maturity of Goethe? You can never "reckon up" these highstrung, open natures, ever ready to be reimpregnated. Was Milton mature when he wrote "Comus," or when he wrote the "Paradise," or when he was writing his great political and social treatises? Who can fail to see (that will take a little pains) that the "Hyperion" of Keats was the index of a tentative maturity (*passez le mot!*) which would have been followed by other maturities if he had lived? In Shelley, one can distinctly see in "Alastor" the maturity of adolescence, and in the "Adonais" and "Epischychidion" the advancing waves of another high tide. One might carry this on for ever. But, to take men of both thought and action, when was the maturity of Lord Lyndhurst? Was it when he sat upon the woolsack, or when he advocated the reform of the laws regulating the property of married women? When was the maturity of Lord Brougham? of John Wes-

* A man once maintained that poets were always born in December, and made out a good list, but he forgot Shakespeare.

ey? of Calvin? of Luther? of Newton? of Columbus? of Sir Walter Raleigh? I mention the last case, because it is a striking instance of a troubled life cut short, the man himself having a character and a capacity so versatile, that he had, up to the time when he laid his head upon the block, never mastered himself, or made sure of his own best.

Still keeping to the outside of the question, for a minute more, let me go back to men of thought, to recall Macaulay's celebrated speeches on the copyright question in 1841-2. Macaulay, it is well known, succeeded in throwing out Talfourd's well-intended bill; but one of the arguments he employed, while it bears directly upon the question before us, may not be remembered. It was this—that the scheme proposed by the author of "Ion" would give a longer term of copyright to the earlier than to the later works of writers whose books were most worth thinking of in relation to the copyright question. Mr Macaulay says:—"No great work of imagination has ever been produced under the age of thirty or thirty-five years, and the instances are few in which any have been produced under the age of forty. I venture to say that no man acquainted with literary history will deny, that, taking the writings of authors generally, the best and most valuable of their works have been produced within the last seventeen years of their lives." I will not carry my own readers through Macaulay's long list—which takes in names as diverse as those of Sophocles, Cervantes, Racine, Goethe, Spenser, Milton, Locke, Bacon, and Shakespeare—and I will admit that Macaulay was a man of old-fashioned standards. But I hold that he has made out his case in so

far as concerns great philosophic works, and imaginative works in which there is great breadth of touch, and a strong grasp of the facts of human life. I cannot, however, conceive why he omitted Daniel Defoe, one of the most striking cases he could possibly have quoted.

But now, for a few sentences, let us draw a little nearer to the heart of the subject.

When we say that a character or an intellect (and, of course, the interaction of the two is incessant and inscrutable) is mellowed or matured late in life, we mean that the processional changes of the mind and the body have not kept the usual time with each other—that the mind seems to have arrived at its best when the body seems to have begun to decline in its capacity. But there is, one needs hardly repeat, great vagueness about all such talk. In the first place, outsiders seldom think of judging except by results. Now the productivity of the intellect is no accurate index of its capacity—though productive power will pretty certainly (not necessarily) be seen to exist, if it does exist. Nor is the character to be judged of rashly by anybody who can get hold of what he may choose to call "fruits." Character is above circumstance, but circumstance goes for something, after all,—as people are ready enough to insist when it suits their purpose; and it may, and undoubtedly does, very often retard healthy growth, and very often obscures the indications of growth. This is, indeed, obvious.

Roughly speaking—and yet speaking with an effort at exactitude—the period of maturity may be said to be (psychologically) the period when the ideal of the individual soul is

so far harmonised with the facts of life and nature, that whatever discord remains does not hinder the attempts of the soul to do its best, in whatever kind. Some discord must always lie at the bottom, which is only another way of saying that one is human, and can only conceive of things in parts, one at a time. But the great battle with us all—a battle which has to be fought in as many shapes as there are people in the world—is to arrive at such a broad, general reconcilement as will serve the ends of duty. Many things may retard this; many things may hasten it; many accidents may disturb it, and require the "special case" (lawyers will know what I mean*) to be re-stated and re-answered. But one thing is absolutely essential—that the facts of experience should have been well absorbed by the mind, and that, in some way, the moment of *insight* should have come. This word "insight" is very much knocked about now-a-days, and it is to be feared that a good many people take it to mean a sort of penetration. But it is rather a sort of receptivity. If I have insight, it is less that I have found things out, than that things have found out me—not that I have looked, and seen, but that somewhat has been shown to me which I could not help seeing, unless I shut or turned away my eye.

If the patient, open eye be necessary to insight, and if insight be the necessary condition of that harmony of the individual nature with the will of God, which is, again, the con-

* A special case is a case (for a lawyer's opinion) in which the issue is narrowed by each party having agreed to as much of the other side's facts as it can.

dition upon which one becomes potentially "mature," or "mellow," it may be conjectured that a number of people never have any true mellowness or maturity at all. A sad, but quite true conjecture. A great many folks won't be at the trouble of keeping their eyes open upon their ideals, *and* the facts of life. Now they are forced to see the facts of life; and, if they will not be at the pains of constantly keeping the other within the field of vision, they can do something else, and only one thing. They can murder the ideal and hide it. Which, alas! is just what they do. Then, they are haunted by its ghost; and their true maturity is, to say the least, put off indefinitely.

There is no doubt, dear reader, that it is very, very hard to submit constantly to the reproaching looks of this ideal, as measured against the first aspect which hard facts present to us—no doubt. The temptation is terrible, to shut the eye, and have done with the puzzle, and the struggle, and the weariness, and the infinite sadness. It is especially so after you have done wrong—or even sometimes after you have done what other people insist on calling wrong, if you have done it to your own wounding and hurt. But, courage and patience! keep your eye open still, for you can never tell at what moment the vision may come to you which shall end the discord. It may come, it not seldom *does* come, in the very moment of reaction from the sense of the worst thing you ever did. Only, it is sure to come, unless you blind yourself.

The uncertainties which hang around the arrival of this supreme moment are enough, of course, to make the period

of maturity utterly incalculable to common eyes. It may come by sorrow—and one man may live with scarce a pang or a pain till he is fifty, while another may have his heart broken up at twenty. It may come in a crisis of severe self-denying labour—and that crisis must choose its own time. It may come with love—or with the renunciation of love—and, to these things, what psychological statist is equal? We have, of course, no means of knowing how many renounce love; but the number of those who know what it is like seems so very small, that one is often tempted to maintain that it never was intended to be anything but an abnormal, exceptional thing—an occasional planet, not a regular light of our human system. Sometimes, the moment of insight comes with a true spiritual word. And, for the most part, I suppose it never comes at all.

This seems rashly said, perhaps; but let us look again. The character begins to mature or mellow, when moral discord has ceased. Now, of those who are *conscious* of ideals, it is to be feared that the majority commit that sort of murder to which I just now referred. As to those who have no such *consciousness*, they have their battle to fight in another way. They live exclusively by external rules, and see the handwriting of God only in external symbols. They naturally expect that obedience to the rules which stand to them for duty shall bring a certain amount of external prosperity. This is their notion of a divine harmony of things. If they are disappointed—if, in other words, they are unfortunate, and if no spiritual teaching shows them a better *theodicy*—they are liable to become cynical. They do not

mature. On the contrary, they become *soured*,—as we commonly call it.—A curious instance of the manner in which popular metaphor often goes to the very heart of a subject. —It is not then so rash, after all, to hint at a fear that the greater number of us do not ripen, but go oscillatingly, discordantly on our way, never reaching the moment of insight from which maturity begins to be possible.

From that point, however, it is often quite an easy thing for the merest spectator to date the time of maturity, and to trace the march of the character onward. In general, indeed, it is not difficult to discern when that period has set in and the productivity of the mind, of whatever sort, has assumed a mellow character. If circumstances are then favourable we get the individual's best, in thought, in action, in the public or private service of God and men. If not, and the character be one of great energy, it may be bruised by the reaction of its own efforts at expression; and then, perhaps, "the agony returns." The "special case" has to be re-stated. The man is in the condition of Christian when he dropped his roll out of his bosom, and had to go and look for it. Or he may fall, in other ways, into sin, and have, for a time, at least, to live on memory. Happy they who can, in such case, make the past do duty, however left-handedly, for the present—until the heavens are again opened to them. But it is, no doubt, the very hardest of all possible work for the conscience; and I think people in that predicament have peculiar claims upon our consideration. Don't you see that if you abuse the man when he is groping about after his roll, he may take your harshness too much to heart, and

fall over the rock-side, or go, in desperation, back to the City of Destruction?

The page is, I fear, becoming almost too serious; or, at least, too sad. And yet we have not gone out of our way. So far as our charity will guide us, we are bound to deal with our fellow-creatures not without reference to the question whether they have or have not so far fought their battle of life as to have reached the period of potential maturity. If they have, they are then strong enough to resist any attempt to "push them over the precipice" (as the phrase goes)—but you needn't try it on with them for your own amusement. For if they should happen to be Winter Pears—persons who have mellowed later than usual—it is probable that they will have, on other grounds, their hands quite full enough without any interference of yours. May this moral meet the eye of those who stand in need of it. For there are plenty of people who jealously intermeddle if they find a busy maturity wearing rose or myrtle. Gather your rue, and leave these bowers of joy and shining slopes of aspiration to your juniors!—they cry. But, by their leave, the soul is greater than the almanac, and to grow backwards is no disqualification for entering even the kingdom of heaven.

VIII.—ON BEING SENTIMENTAL.

IT would be amusing to trace the steps by which the words "sentiment" and "sentimental," once words of praise, have come to mean something bad. When Sterne wrote his "Sentimental Journey through France and Italy," he intended, and was understood to intend, to describe the book by an adjective that would recommend it. In one of the posthumous stories of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, I remember a passage in which the heroine is delighted to find in a book some pencil notes by the hero of "the most reflective and sentimental kind." Who cannot find among his old books, "Poems, Didactic and Sentimental," or "Sentimental Discourses for Youth?"

Did not Wordsworth classify some of his writings as poems "of Sentiment and Reflection?"* Does not Isaac Disraeli, in the "Curiosities of Literature," (Second Series,) devote a long paper to the task of commending to people's attention a new class of biography to be called Sentimental, which he thinks insufficiently cultivated? Does he not wind up by saying that Gibbon (!) had "contemplated the very ideal of Sentimental Biography;" that "the subject would powerfully address itself to the feelings of every Englishman;" and that "we may regret that Gibbon had left only the project?" How often, in turning over an old-fashioned book, and not so very old either, may we find a pencilled comment something like this—"A most admirable and sentimental author, my dear—read him and follow his counsels, so prays your affte. mother!" I have the very case now under my eyes, in a book that seems to have been well-read in Calcutta at the beginning of the century. Now, when did the tide begin to turn in the use of this adjective? I think the last, or almost the last, speech uttered by Sir Peter Teazle in the "School for Scandal" is "Oh, d—n your sentiment!" but the break-down of Joseph Surface can never have done it *all*. Indeed, if there ever was any considerable number of persons running about in society who habitually talked what our grandfathers called sentiment, they must have been bores of a degree and quality that would speedily wear out human patience and produce a reaction.

What our forefathers meant by sentiments was what we

* This heading covers, in my edition, the "Ode to Duty," the "Happy Warrior," "Dion," and "Lycoris."

now call maxims—moral deliverances such as we have seen in copy-book slips, as—"Reason should ever control passion,"—"Fidelity in friendship is beautiful,"—"Benevolence is a virtue,"—"Truth is ever victorious over error,"—and the like. Or, again, they meant what some people still call "sentiments," though others simply classify them as wishes or aspirations. As—"May the wing of friendship never moult a feather!"—"May we ne'er want a friend, or a bottle to give him!"—"My charming girl, my friend, and pitcher!"—and the like. Sometimes, at a "serious" festival, you may have heard the chairman say—"Mr So-and-so will now speak to the following sentiment—'The cause of civil and religious liberty all over the world!'" And then Mr So-and-so rises, with a slip of paper in his hand, supposed to contain a copy of this sentiment in MS., and he speaks to it.

It is difficult to picture to one's-self a race of creatures running loose in drawing-rooms and dining-rooms, parlours and shops, streets and market-places, and discharging sentiments at the rest of mankind. But evidently the conception was not so difficult to our grandfathers as it is to ourselves. Take up an oldish copy of Thomson or Gray, or *Elegant Extracts*. Here is a steel engraving, and a good one too. On a mossy bank, by the side of a brawling rivulet, whose rapid passage over the pebbly shallows is supposed to be suggestive, is reclined a handsome young man—such a one as Fielding drew in Joseph Andrews, where you may read his portrait in pen and ink. But he is attired in the costume of a later period—pumps, silk stockings, cut-away coat,

frilled shirt, long kerseymere vest, with angular tippety collar. Over his shoulders broad are his hyacinthine locks, and he has no hat on. His face is towards the spectator of the picture, and he is raising both hands, with the palms turned outwards. He *might* be saying, "Dear me, now!" but a reference below the picture to "p. 91" instructs you better. You there find that he is presumed to be composing a poem, and uttering, at the moment of sight, the words:—

> "Health is at best a vain precarious thing,
> And fair-faced youth is ever on the wing!"

Now, this is a sentiment. The youth might walk straight off the page before the footlights, go on for Joseph Surface, and provoke, indirectly, Sir Peter Teazle's imprecation. He belongs to the period at which were current coin, not flouted "token-pieces," those little classic bits which we now call *delectus* quotations; such as *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*—*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes*, &c.—*Sic vos non vobis*, &c.—and all the rest of them. If Colonel Newcome had met him, he would have broken out directly, "*Emollunt mores*,"—and if Clive (who, by the by, was not born) or any one else had pulled his coat-tail, it would have been because of the bad syntax, and not because it was *mauvais ton* to be sentimental. Now-a-days it *would* be *mauvais ton*. If a young man, ever so well dressed, were to go about saying, as opportunity offered, "Virtue rewards her followers," or "Ingratitude to parents is base," he would not be thought a prize by affectionate mothers with marriageable daughters. But in the days when Lindley Murray wrote his Grammar,

it seems to have been a proper part of a polite education to instil into the minds of youth at every chance—by way of "example" in grammar, for instance—maxims in morals or theology. As—"The grass that grows under our feet, the sun that rolls over our heads, the food that we eat, and the rest that we enjoy, daily admonish us of a benevolent, superintending power!" (is that correctly quoted, young shaver?) To such a length, indeed, was the taste for these little statements of opinion carried, that almost anything, however obvious, was made to fall into the mode of the Sentiment proper, and do duty for it. As—"Gold is corrupting; the sea is green; a lion is bold,"—which is also in Murray's Grammar.

In modern times we have changed all that. If a person were to contribute to a conversation the sentiment, "We should ever heed the voice of nature," he would be thought as much out of order as Mr F.'s aunt—"There's milestones on the Dover road." We lean now to epigram and banter rather than to sentiment and maxim. The reason is obvious. Our Virtue is so well-tried and so firmly consolidated that our admiration of ourselves reacts in chaff—

> "Irony all, and feign'd abuse,
> Such as perplex'd lovers use;
> When, instead of Dearest Miss,
> Jewel, Honey, Sweetheart, Bliss,
> And those forms of old admiring,
> They say, Cockatrice, and Siren,
> Basilisk, and all that's evil,
> Witch, Hyæna, Mermaid, Devil."

We love Duty so well, we moderns, that we can play at knocking it over. "Our strong and solid loves" are

"Like holy rocks, by Druids poised,
The least force shakes, but nothing moves."

So we tickle our fancy by shaking it with irony. In point of fact, we have no means of telling whether there ever really was any large class of people who went about in society saying fine things, but never did them; or whether, on the other hand, there ever was a large class of listeners who were predisposed to believe in the goodness of the people who went about uttering the maxims. But we must bear in mind that there was scarcely any popular literature in those days, and comparatively very little associated effort. At present the public hires and fees a class—the literary class—to do the sentiment for it, as much as it wants done; and, besides, there are so many opportunities for "sentimental" activity, that the excuse for mere talk is less. It is difficult not to believe, reading old-fashioned books, and looking at old-fashioned prints, that there was a real difference. There is a particular print, now in my mind, which I once saw at a broker's shop in a back street. It belongs to about the first days of the Regency, or a few years before; just about when Dr Buchan was writing his "Domestic Medicine," I should say. It is dedicated to the President or something of the Royal Humane Society, and represents a young man who had been half drowned restored to his friends, alive. Of course there is a "scene." All the female figures have short-waisted frocks; all the males have knee-breeches and long hair—except those who have wigs. And they have all, I think, their hands upraised and their mouths open. They are all uttering sentiments, I presume—which, now-a-days, a newspaper

paragraph would probably have uttered for them. Indeed, everybody must have noticed that in the caricatures of those days, and even so recently as those of H. B., sentiments were openly put into the mouths of the people represented in pictures. You see a bladder-shaped scroll issuing from the mouth, and the speech is written inside the scroll. When we make a caricature, we put the speeches at the bottom, if anywhere, like scraps of comedy dialogue. But in the majority of cases there is so complete an under-current of intelligence on the spectator's part presupposed that no sentiment at all is expressed. It is the same in social intercourse. We no more want a man to tell us that Virtue rewards her followers than that Queen Anne is dead. Three-fourths, perhaps, of every company do not believe Virtue does reward her followers; those who do believe it take a mutual understanding for granted.

The established use of the word Sentimental as a term of reproach in our own days deserves a little serious attention.

There are certain currents of sensation which have their origin in the strongest and deepest emotions of which we are capable. The symmetrical play of these currents connects itself with the highest forms of beauty and sublimity. The most momentous of moral truths—namely, that through suffering we may reach the highest pinnacles of Life—shines, reflected like a star, in all these currents. When they flow forth to action, moved by winds of God, men and angels desire to look into these things. But a certain facility in the nervous and glandular systems of some people permits the

voluntary self-conscious awakening of these currents at points far distant from their deeper sources, and distant, too, from any possible ends of noble action. To wake them up by artificial excitement becomes a means of depraved pleasure to weak, thin natures, which shun the test of duty. They may do it by talking, by reading, by reverie, by drinking, by music, by trivial, petty philanthropisings, by the abuse of "religious" services, and in other ways. When this happens we are offended, and justly offended. It is self-injury, sacrilege, and insult all at once. It is, at best, a voluptuous indecency. Could a poet translate the crime into images of thought? Yes; but nobody could bear to hear him recite them.

A person, then, who is "sentimental" in *this* way is a proper object of disapprobation; perhaps dislike. He not only lowers himself; he does what he can (by simulating what is sacred) to lessen the grounds of our reliance in the most desperate situations of humanity. Relaxing his own character, he sets a bad example, too; and, worse still, makes liable to the ridicule of the sons of Belial whatever an oath can be sworn by in the heavens above or in the earth beneath. There are people—not many, but some do exist—who seem to live entirely on sentiment. All the substance of their nature is floating, nebulous, pathless. There appears to be no backbone of intellect or conscience. True, a sudden shock of danger from without may make it clear to the observer that there *is* a latent solidity in the character. You may see "sentimentalists" come out finely under pressure sometimes; but this is when there is much *intelligent*

self-consciousness, and something of the *histrio* in the man. We all know a mincing fop may be good at a forlorn hope —but the foppishness of such a man is half of it deliberate irony.

What, however, in the just and noble meaning, is Sentiment? It is the backwater of mighty feeling. It is what is left behind by the high tides of the great primitive emotions. It is the memory of passion. It is the ingrained colouring of thought. To discharge thought of that colouring is impossible; but a good many people who abuse "Sentimentalism" seem as if they would like to do just that impossible thing. Thus, they have a cold sneer ready for us if we speak of the sacredness of life, the majesty of human nature, the beauty of a mother's love, or the innocence of childhood. Thus, Jeremy Bentham, mentioning that Constantine forbade the branding of criminals on the face because it was a violation of the law of nature to disfigure the majesty of the human countenance, exclaims, with disgust, "The majesty of the face of a scoundrel!" But Bentham mistook; and so do other writers of his school. If there was no "majesty" of which a scoundrel was *capable*, then there was nothing to make it worth our while to discipline him.* If there was, it was our

* I allow this mistaken expression—"discipline him"—to stand, for the sake of exhibiting in a correction the nature of the error into which my pen slipped here, and the extreme caution which is necessary in writing, when the truth is dear. The passage should read thus after the word "nothing:"—"to make it worth our while, as a matter of civil polity, to put him to pain in self-defence, or, as children of an Almighty Father, to discipline either him or ourselves."

I may repeat in this note, what is hinted in the text, that the "respect" which has been rightly claimed for a criminal is not at all a thing to be laughed at, though attempts have been made to grin it away. It is not the "respect" which is due to a good man, but it is that other-side of it which inevitably arises in a

duty to do nothing to create or to increase any degree of incapacity on his part, or anybody else's part. You shall not, said the Hebrew code, give more than forty blows in punishment, "lest thy brother seem vile unto thee." And here is a short passage, not uninstructive, from another tale by Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin:* "After a violent debauch he would let his beard grow, and the sadness that reigned in the house I shall never forget: he was ashamed to meet even the eyes of his children. *This is so contrary to the nature of things that it gave me exquisite pain; I used at those times to show him extreme respect.*" An amusing idea, is it not, to show "extreme respect" to a wrong-doer? to show, by standing at an awful distance from his wrong-doing, our grief that an Unseen Majesty should be wronged? As amusing as the idea of a child, for example, who has never been addressed with an overbearing word, whose body has never been touched, or even approached, except with respectful tenderness! But I must not allow a passing illustration to carry me out of the direct line of what I was saying. There is no guidance to anything but death, decay, and rottenness, for either individuals or nations, in thought which

good man forced to contemplate a bad one. It is *horror* softened into awe by religious feeling. It is the mind keeping its distance, in the light of the infinite ideas, from a portentous thing which yet it *cannot* isolate from the thoughts of God, Immortality, and Reconciliation. Now this mood, like every other form of respect, excludes what is maudlin; excludes taking liberties in any kind. And though it does not exclude indignation or severity, it excludes cruelty, scorn, and mere invective.

* This writer is *appropriately* quoted here, because, though she belongs to a time when the word "sentimental" was respectable, and uses it as a term of praise, she was, in fact, what many people would now call an anti-sentimentalist; and she hits hard too.

pretends to have discharged itself of the colouring-matter of Sentiment. If once we have really ceased to hear the murmur of the infinite, beautiful ocean in the shell, we soon fling the shell away, and it is trodden under foot of men. There is not an act of our lives—no, not one—into which it is not the interest of every human being to import as much as possible of that diffused sense of Terror, Mystery, Beauty, and Tenderness, which is the nature of true Sentiment.

To suppose that this diffused sense of whatever makes our little lives worth while, implies any mean flinching from pain—our own, or that of others—is a great mistake. The Aristotelian virtue of Tragedy—the παθηματων καθαρσιν—assuredly contemplated nothing so weak. It is well known, as a matter of fact, that the highest tragedy, deeply as it moves one, does not move to tears; which are always a relief, sometimes a positive pleasure. What Englishman, or Englishwoman, *cries* at *Lear*, at *Macbeth*, or at *Hamlet?* When did the reading or the representation of either of them ever enfeeble for action or dispose to anything that was bad? The rule by the observance of which Art, in all its kinds, must escape false Sentiment, I hope to discuss more deliberately another day, in another connexion. For this time, it will be enough to say that Sentiment is the diffused sense which makes it possible for Art to address us at all; and that Morality, or Civil Polity, without Art (implied, at least, as possible and desirable) must as inevitably tend to corruption as Art without Morality; or either, or all, without Religion. In other words, we cannot

banish S ent from the *atmosphere* of any region of human l

It is c again, from the nature of the case, that *false* Sentiment c never be banished from any community until Art has t its true place in the circle of existence. This may app barren proposition, because Art and Senti- ment mu t but so do all things. To beautify s n, and there are so few likely to a s- hat I have observed, for some years pa horror—with a ceaseless incubus of dre d, owing tendency to make light of Senti ment. ther words, to brutalise existence. Is this hen? Did you ever go into a music-hall, or a low place of worship, and look round upon the coarse, sodden faces there? If so, does it seem to you that to preach down Sentiment is precisely what is required? "No," you perhaps reply, "but let Sentiment keep its places—and Jurisprudence, for example, is not one of them. That is all." Pardon me, it is *not* all. If we had, or could have, a perfect machinery of life, it might be; but, in the meanwhile, we must import our checks and compensations from where we can, and as we can—not violating principles, but acknowledging that compensations are *what* they are. Again, we should all consider not only what we mean, but what we shall be *taken* to mean by the majority of those who are reached by our words. Now dare we say that the majority of our fellow-creatures are disposed to be over sentimental? "My British brethren and sisters, I find *that* you are in all things too artistic, too finely-fibred, too

full of sentiment,"—*there* would be an exordium for a popular discourse; and who cannot see, in a reporter's parenthesis, "(shouts of laughter)?" No, no: this will never do. We are entitled to put, concerning anything and everything, the homely question, fetched from laundry experience of colours that are not "fast"—will it wash? But whatever *will* wash, whatever stands the labour-test, we must respect in the first place; and then, if it be a source of delight, increase if we can; especially if the delight be of an ascending order. The useful encourages itself; let us, as Goethe said, encourage the Beautiful; and, so long as Pandora's box remains unshut, and the brood abroad, let us not give up our right to gather in compensations, as we may, from the suggestions of that sense of Mystery and Loveliness which, propagated in gradually lessening pulses from shocks of emotion in sight of great facts like Death, Love, Birth, and diffusing itself in endlessly recurring tides over human existence, takes the name of Sentiment.

IX.—PERSONALITY IN FICTION.

THE subject of personality in literature is, of course, not a new one. It suggests, at once, what Addison says, in *Spectator* 262, (and elsewhere,) "When I place an imaginary name at the head of a character, I examine every syllable, every letter of it, that it may not bear any resemblance to one that is real. . . . . I would not make myself merry with [even] a piece of pasteboard that is invested with a public character,"—and so on.

In quite recent times, we have had examples of personality in fiction, either alleged only, or alleged and proved too. A case was alleged against the late Dr Andrew Reed

—of which the story is well known. The authoress of "Very Successful" was unquestionably guilty of personality; but that unfortunate lady was pardoned,—by some of us, at all events. Poor Mr Whitty, the author of "Friends of Bohemia," was another offender—he even went the length of introducing Harriet Martineau as Miss Lutherah into a novel—but he has long ago passed into the land where, as it is customary to say, (though nobody can be sure of it,) human judgment cannot even reach him. Generally speaking, however, modern literature is very free from anything like personality of the kind that is offensive.

Almost everybody who has thought over the subject at all must have come to the conclusion that there is very little guidance in the received commonplaces about open public condemnation of either the living or the dead. For the freedom with which we habitually write of the dead we have no real excuse, except that we do not meet them in the streets, and are not liable to be *inconvenienced* by our freedom of speech. But our policy in this matter cannot justify itself to any mind that has ever felt the nearness of a beloved person "gone before." As for public condemnation of the living by writing which is called personal, we have, most of us, a true, though indistinct feeling that the authority of the press is, for the present, so much greater than its accountability, that personal writing is one of the most abominable things under the sun. The whole question is habitually treated in a very unsatisfactory manner; but we must be contented, for a time, with such hints of guidance as we can get, and where even hints are wanting we must

rely upon the good sense and kindly conscience which are here and there able to make themselves controlling centres of opinion. The one thing which fidelity to the truth meanwhile requires of us all is, that we do not pretend, or allow it to be supposed that we admit, that the received commonplaces represent final truth upon a very difficult topic. No doubt, the tendency of literature is to become more and more "personal" in the sense of fixing more definitely the responsibility of all writing which directly affects others; and its path of transit to a fresh stage of activity is already possible to be mapped out by an attentive reader of the signs of the times. But the intention in this place is to discuss, very briefly, a much more limited question:—Is it the fact that a novelist who employs only a thin disguise, or who employs no disguise at all, but actually mentions places by name as scenes of action, must necessarily be "personal" in the sense of giving pain to somebody, or, at least, running risk of giving pain?

Let us be just to begin with. It is, of course, quite possible that any given critic who condemns a given instance of this quasi-personality may know that in the case of the particular illustration he employs the comment is just. He may himself have been actually hit. But, for all that, we cannot get a *principle* out of his illustration, and we shall soon see that no principle whatever can justify a critic in condemning a work of fiction as "personal." It is quite possible that the case may be so glaring that there can be no mistake about it; only we cannot generalise beforehand so as to furnish the critic with a master-key that will fit all cases.

But, in spite of this, we may take leave to doubt if the most life-like portions of novels are those in which the novelist has been copying direct from the life, or in which he is *conscious* of having a model at all. At all events, even if that doubt should be thought too wide in its sweep, (as perhaps it is,) we must go so far as to maintain that cases of spontaneous "creation" in the storyteller's mind—cases in which the characters appeared to come of their own accord and were yet held for true and real by the reader—are quite *as* common as those in which a model is set up to be drawn from. It has been well said (by Mr Lewes, I think) that you may have a living model and yet not produce a living figure; and the converse is quite as true.

In his "Yeast," Mr Kingsley begins a chapter with the following paragraph:—"I heard a story the other day of our most earnest and genial humourist, who is just now proving himself also our most earnest and genial novelist. 'I like your novel exceedingly,' said a lady; 'the characters are so natural—all but the baronet,* and he surely is overdrawn: it is impossible to find such coarseness in his rank of life!' The artist laughed. 'And that character,' said he, 'is almost the only exact portrait in the whole book.' So it is. People do not see the strange things which pass them every day."

Now it is a well-known fact that people whom a painter of character really intends to draw are often the last to feel the likeness; while people whom he never thought of will suppose he "meant them." This may be because his likeness

* Doubtless, Mr Kingsley was referring to Sir Pitt Crawley.

-pecifically true—so that the "
And who can forget what Mr Di
upon this subject? "I have h
opposite me in the flesh, ask me
ever was such a person." On the
very absurd to expect the camel to
picture which the artist got out of l
ness. Surely there are few of us, wi
who have not tasted the wicked plea
to his face, and seeing him join in th
with an innocence as complete as that
you ring the bell for the servant, fanc
own little delight in a tinkling noise,
with simple irrelevant joy. Then, as
a writer draws life-like portraits in a b
to be told that he has been showing u
never thought of—perhaps never saw
a man whom he never intended to hit;
happen to call at the wrong ho
we wanted

ters, living and acting in real places, and may have been doing it without disguise, and with the full knowledge of at least the *possibility* that his picture would be recognised. But, though he may have used no *disguise*, he may, surely, have used an immense *discretion*. A critic says, looking on, "Such and such things in your book must irritate such and such people." The artist, however, may reply, "How *can* you tell? I know the people ten thousand times better than you do, and I have made my selection of facts with the very best discretion I could exercise, and with the express design of *avoiding* what would give pain." There are, or were, people who would consider frequent washing and brushing-up a token of a desire to be "over-genteel." A critic, who knew nothing of the habits of thought of a community of this kind, would call it very unkind if such a community were distinctly localised and faithfully described; but the people themselves would not be in the least hurt. It is, besides, a positive fact, that some persons will jump at notoriety, of whatever kind. It does not follow that because a person is shown up in a book, *he* is aggrieved, (though good taste may be offended.) Perhaps he is gratified. Some people "like to be despised." This is not a cynical fancy, but hard fact. Who has not heard and seen a fellow-sufferer get quite angry if it was hinted that his headache was not as bad as somebody else's? I have known a man buy and circulate gratis copies of a newspaper in which he was made game of in such a manner that his best friends had made calls of condolence, anxiously expecting to find him quite demoralised. But was he? Not he, indeed: he was

On the whole, different human beings see the
with such astonishingly different eyes that one i
in predicting that even strong ridicule or invec
taken as it is meant, or that blame will not be rea
Everybody knows that a reviewer can shave a b
fine a razor that the process is not felt, and that t
readers may make quite different things out of
When Dolly Winthrop was fancying Silas Mar
fresh-faced boy, with clear, bright eyes, looking
he sang the "Christmiss music"—

"Hark, the errol angils sing"—

poor Silas Marner saw nothing but a dim roun
spots in it, and heard in the "Christmas musi
"rhythm of an industrious hammer." And so,
befalls all through life. We do not see it in yo
have it forced upon us at last; and sometimes w
it, and sometimes, perhaps, we cry at it. Only
care we do not misuse our experience, and gro

a 'cute man's inside." Certainly not; and for that reason you can never—in the absence of special information, such as the artist himself may be supposed to possess, judge whether an artist who distinctly names the place and scenery of his story is in any bad sense personal or not. Because a man says Lancashire or Hampshire, where Mr Anthony Trollope would say Darkshire or Blankshire, it does not follow that he is putting you on the track of his secret any more than the lapwing who chirps *pee-wit* on purpose to lead you astray. "You can't tell what goes on in a 'cute man's inside." Your 'cute man may lay his scene in Middlesex, transplant his characters from Lancashire, and import his story from the West Indies. The chances are a million to one that he *does* something of the kind.

The extreme difficulty that besets the subject might be illustrated, if it were worth while, by an examination of the construction of well-known novels in which the "personal" element was very strong, and by which, nevertheless, little pain was given. Briefly, it may be said, that in some of the most powerful novels of modern times, there is known to be, unsuspected by critics and the public, a very intense "personal" element, the reality of which is *not* a secret to the persons really concerned with it, and is not complained of. Lastly, the general reader, who neither writes books nor criticises them, may rest assured that although he can tell what is truth-like, he cannot tell what is true (*i.e.*, fact) in a book; and that he is quite safe in disregarding the Enlightened Critic who knows when his author is painting from life; when he is, "we suspect," translating

...ssly-pla
Enlightened Critic a little le
and clear the literary atmo
behind which fools shake the
selves gods. Will nobody, wh
a few such hoaxes—cry *pee-wi*
Critic, and then turn round w
As he will make enemies, he o
pecuniary competence; and he
preserver after the disclosure o
Don't all speak at once!

X.—EGOTISM.*

THE subject of Egotism is one upon which it is particularly easy to be cynical in that half-hearted *tu quoque* vein which has latterly come to be taken for charity. "You will call this egotism. Egotism, *mon cher?* It is. I know it. I confess it. *Mais après?* Are *you* never guilty of egotism? Do *you* never talk too much of yourself, think too much of yourself, take too much for yourself?" I do *not* propose, in the paragraphs which follow, to adopt this manner. I propose to say that egotism is a bad thing; that there are people in the world who are *not* egotists, never could, never will be

* This essay was written, and waiting its turn for printing, two years ago; it has only been very slightly modified now.

writer. comm

What *is* Egotism? It n
pre-occupation with one's ow
the work we *ought* to be doi
performed. Unfortunately, w
all presentation of one's own sel
uncomfortable is egotism. Ob
are two parties to that bargain,
sibly, taking any given case, lie i
one side, of a fair degree of promi
Again, in so far as egotism bel
æsthetics of life, it is a matter of tas
nature so exceedingly reticent, that t
the naïvetés of the less reticent, how
are many cultivated persons who do
the essential difference between *lyric* e
behind the *persona* or mask of the artis
the individual, grasping and unconsci
Again: it is clear
principle

occupy in the method of life, but no moralist wholly excludes it: and it is a truism to say that this presupposes the *risk* of egotism.

Let us go a step farther, by putting a case. A dear friend has come home from a long journey in foreign lands. He sits by our side and tells us of his perils by shipwreck, by wild men, by wild beasts. Necessarily the first person singular of the pronoun is occurring every moment. It is either "I" or "me" all the way through. Is that egotism? Or if he writes his story out, and prints it in a book, word for word as he told it under our roof, is that egotism?

No, you answer, that is not egotism, because there is sympathy on the part of the hearers: the pulse of affection winnows away a clear wide space around each heart, and so makes room for the other "I."

Now, this answer applies to the case of the talker; but not to the case of the writer. "Oh," you reply, "*his* justification is, that he has something to tell, in which we should be interested, whoever told it. In the case of the friendly circle, the justification lay in the sympathy."

True; but here we come back to the question of lyrical egotism, behind a *persona*, consciously employed for a purpose. Surely the justification of this, too, is complete, if, other things being equal, the sympathy be found. It is idle to say that the appeal is from stranger to stranger. Strangers are no longer strange when they have listened to each other, and understood.

Still wider of the mark than any of the other literary commonplaces upon the subject (I believe the *instinct* of

found the "I" occurring ten
last work at random I read tl
that all oxen ruminate, what
have no image in my mind of
shall know all of them, and I
those I do know." Is this eg
write a thousand sentences in
pattern, it would be awkward
violate the etiquette of style;
egotism than this sheet of paper.

But we will put yet another
writer or a speaker to produce th
with Mr A. I disagree with Mr E
to be flogged. I think a wife
divorce for active cruelty, among
have the "I" employed four ti
another writer or speaker to say:
B. is wrong. Garrotters ought to
be allowed a full divorce f

such strange quantity, that a true bill lies for egotism, or at least, for extreme awkwardness. In the "Anti-Jacobin," or somewhere, was published a parody on the political writings of William Cobbett. The last few paragraphs contained a great number of blanks, and a footnote of apology requested the reader to fill them in with the personal pronoun in question—the printer's stock having been exhausted! Margaret Fuller is said to have been another case in point—though it never struck the writer of these lines that she was offensively an egotist. Who can forget what Lowell says?

> "A woman must surely see well, if she try,
> The whole of whose being's a capital I:
> She will take an old notion and make it her own,
> By saying it o'er in her Sibylline tone,
> Or persuade you 'tis something tremendously deep,
> By repeating it so as to put you to sleep;
> And she well may defy any mortal to see through it,
> When once she has mix'd up her infinite Me through it."

But very little dependence is to be placed upon *persiflage* of this kind. It must always be remembered that people whose talk or whose writing is antagonistic in its character are apt to appear egotistic. A sincere controversialist, fighting against long odds, is naturally betrayed into strong emphasis; the smaller the minority in which he finds himself, the greater will be the combative energy required for standing firm; and it is very likely that in the honourable self-assertion upon which he is forced in the heat of action, he may show too much of himself, and become egotistic—to that extent. It is a bad thing; but a thing which may plead strongly for pardon with sincere

persons. Nor is it by any means the worst kind of egotism.

The worst kind of egotism is that which *dictates*. A man may assert his own opinion with passion, with persistency nay, with an arrogant disdain of other people's opinions, and yet not speak dictatorially. He may still go on using, and with perfect simplicity of heart, the phraseology of doubt and qualification; so long as he continues to show that he is conscious he is only asserting his own opinions, he is not an egotist in any offensive sense. It is, indeed, very seldom that the true egotist rages. What distinguishes him is a calm way of hinting that it will be better for you to take *his* view of the subject—behind which you see lurking the equally calm menace—if you don't, I will try and make you; or I would if I had the power.

Not every reader of these lines has heard the immortal mustard story. I do not think any story ever gave me such intense delight; it never wearies me, and I will venture to tell it over again, often as it has been told. Mr Brown sat at a *restaurant* table, eating a steak. Opposite him, reading the *Times*, sat Mr Jones. Jones observed, out of the tail of his eye, that Brown was not having mustard with his beef. This would never do. Why, everybody takes mustard! It must be a mistake: it is a case for a kindly hint. Pass the mustard, then, with a gentle reminder: "The mustard, sir?"

"Thank you," said Brown, but took none of the mustard. Perhaps he was of the opinion of some physicians, that a substance which can vesicate the sole of the foot is hardly fit to be taken into the stomach. But Jones had no

misgivings. His next words had in them an accent of reproach, almost of threatening:—

"You will take mustard, sir?" again pushing the mustard-pot that way.

"I'm obliged to you," said Brown, blandly, "but I never do take it."

This was an unexpected blow for Jones. He felt exactly as the average mortal feels when confronted by an entirely new phenomenon in the conduct of another on some point upon which the received practice is uniform. Deeply pained at the depravity of Brown, he felt that he must interfere and make an example of him. The public opinion of the whole *restaurant* would support him in enforcing upon Brown the usual thing; so that he had a chance of gratifying the love of power which he took for activity of moral sentiment. But, greatly priding himself upon his forbearance, he made one more effort to bring the divergent brother to reason—an effort founded upon (what he supposed to be) universal consent. Who can resist *that?*

"Really, sir, this is most extraordinary! Everybody takes mustard to beef!"

Brown did not, as the story goes, take the trouble to count up Jones's "everybody," or to reply that millions of human beings did *not* take mustard to beef. He left Jones in full possession of his false premiss, and aimed straight at his inference with a quiet—

"*I* never do take mustard to beef."

Now, everybody who knows what "human nature" is will foresee that this could only end in a grand crash of some

sort. This mustard-decliner was, in the eye of Jones, an egotist. He had, in plain fact, used the pronoun *I* three separate times—Jones not once. True, he had done this most pacifically, most politely. He had shown no signs of a desire to take away the mustard-pot of Jones, or of Jones's Everybody. But Jones, interpreting Brown's mind by his own consciousness, thought to himself, "Dear me! this egotist will be trying to make us all give up mustard. He must be put down at once. We must protest against this." So thinking, he rose up in a sacred fury, seized the mustard, dived deep with the spoon, and, bespattering Brown's plate with the condiment, shouted at him—

"Confound it, sir! you must and shall have mustard!"

Now, these things are an allegory. But the moral is plain. The egotist is not necessarily the man who differs, though he stand alone, and have in consequence to make his protest one long capital I. The egotist is he who genteelly takes assent for granted; the very assumption is the index of a threat. No form of egotism is so offensive and so mischievous as that placid sort of manner, whether in a writer or a speaker, which begs the question of your acceptance of what is said. If it be associated with extreme ignorance, or simplicity, it is amusing: if with kindness, tolerable, so long as the kind fit is on. But every man who takes assent for granted has in him the making of a persecutor, and would, if he could, assert the Divine Right of Blockheads by force of whipcord. The egotist of pugnacity, like William Cobbett, is bad enough—so is the egotist of melancholy-morbid

intensity, like Margaret Fuller. It may even be admitted that opinions asserted with pugnacious egotism have something of the mark of the beast upon them. But both these types are rare, and introduce little danger into human affairs, come when they may. At the worst, they are irritating to others, and mischievous to themselves, by wasting good time. But the person, for example, of whom Leigh Hunt tells the following story, had in him the making of a Bomba or a Bumble—as the chances might be. "Once," says Mr Hunt, "travelling through ——shire, I called upon a gentleman residing near one of the finest waterfalls in that county. As time was of some value, I could only partake of a slight repast, which my host prolonged by giving a history of the progress he had lately made in draining some meadows. An opportunity at length occurring, I ventured to hint that I should wish to be directed to the waterfall. 'Oh! the waterfall! ah! true—there is a waterfall; but, my dear sir, it is almost at the bottom of the valley. Surely you would not attempt to go there, among the long grass and briars. Never mind the waterfall. Take a walk with me, and I will show you something that is really worth seeing, and where you will be in no danger of falling over a precipice.' With that he led me into his garden. 'There,' said he, 'there is a garden I planted and gravelled myself. There you may rove about as much as you please.' 'But, sir, I have travelled several miles to see the waterfall; and unless'—'Oh! the waterfall! anybody can see the waterfall! The commonest fellow in the country can do that. But'—pausing with all the solemnity of dignified anger—'I do

assure you, sir, very few can have an opportunity of seeing my garden.'"

I wish I could hope to express even a small part of the disgust with which this anecdote inspires me. We have surely fallen, while reading it, upon the essence of egotism. A man is an egotist when he is "wrapped up" in himself, so that his sympathies are hide-bound, and complaisance, even of the negative kind, is impossible to him. The question is not whether he speaks in the first person singular or the first person plural. Let him speak as he likes! The question is, Does he measure things by their relations to himself above all things, and show in his manner a desire to enforce his standards upon you? A man may very innocently say, "My garden is beautiful;" but he is an egotist if he says, "My garden is beautiful, *because* it is mine." And if he have got as far as that, he is sure to be prepared to go one step farther, and be displeased with you, if you prefer the waterfall. Egotism is, in truth, that form of self-assertion which has the possibility of tyranny or jealousy behind it. It is not the mere garrulity of kindly button-holding, though the *I* be sprinkled over the page till the printer's stock be exhausted. It will be found that writers who are prone to what unindulgent readers call egotism are usually those who run out what they have to say into a somewhat conversational mould. Now, the essential point in that manner of writing is, that, like conversation itself, it implicates *two*. It isolates each listener, and takes him, singly, into the writer's confidence. It is *one* speaking *to* one. It is "I"—but speaking to "*you*." And

"your" part is always pretty plainly implied for "you." Such writing is a sort of duet—the other part underneath can be distinctly heard. At least, it ought to be, to justify the "egotistic" manner; and very generally it is. The charge of egotism comes, in such cases, from readers who are themselves egotistic; who want to have more of the talk than they think is permitted to them. I say, *think*, because a little attention would often discern the part taken by the Other in the conversation. There are writers (Carlyle and Emerson are instances) who are called self-contradictory because they are constantly, by rapid transitions of phrase, stating the opponent's case alternately with their own; and many a writer (instances could again be quoted) is called an egotist because this rapid alternation of sides is overlooked.

Thus, then, one would venture to say that a monologue, in the first person, is redeemed from the charge of egotism when dialogue is implied—in other words, when the writer (or speaker) contrives as he goes along to wait upon the reader for sympathy, and weave that sympathy into the thread of thought so as to acknowledge the contribution. Whether he does or does not contrive to do that is sometimes a puzzling question: for there are two to the bargain, and whether one of them is conceited, or the other cantankerous, nobody knows. But if the use of the first person singular in (say) the moderate proportion of a third makes egotism, then it is a bad look-out for the magic words of self-surrender—*I love you.*

The whole subject of talking about one's own self is a very curious one. Some people cannot do it; but have a painful

way of looking and speaking, as if they would *like* to. "That sunflower," said a friend to me one day, "looks as if it wanted to say something about itself—it pains me; why can't it speak?" Probably most of us have acquaintances who look like that sunflower. Now, they are really egotists of a very tiresome kind—unless they are persons of such calibre that we feel pretty sure that they will *some* day speak because they have something to say that will be worth listening to. I once knew a hobble-de-hoy who persecuted a young lady for months by looking at her as if he wanted to say something about himself. He was a young man who stammered a little. One day the young lady made an opportunity for him. He took it greedily, and said, with much apparent relief to his own mind—"I was t—t—wenty last birthday." Nothing ever came of it; but let it not be too hastily concluded that there could have been no *rationale* to this communication! Mr Wilkie Collins would, with perfect ease, invent, in one hour, ten different sets of circumstances to account for it, and he would give it a sequence of fact as easily as I now hold the pen. Now, life is much more complex than the fancy of any novelist can make it, and no doubt this poor fellow had a meaning which, if we could get at it, would be found to excuse the apparent egotism of his communication. *Such* confidences are not worth speculating about; but some confidences are, even when they do not at once command sympathy. Nearly all *quickening* communications are "egotistic." Good society, which hates being disturbed, dislikes all communications of the kind. Whether it reads or listens, it prefers Discourse of Remarks; which

might as well be uttered by one person as another: after-dinner discourse, all in the same key—like the talk of a clever gentleman, which you are not intended to remember, which does not stir your pulse or make you open your eyes, and to which you really needn't make any answer at all. The egotist, however, is by nature an excited appealing personage; he wants to carry the sympathy of the Other along with him; and, in fact, his monologue is at bottom a dialogue. If he can really manage that, the capital I's that besprinkle his matter will be as harmless as the buttercups in the grass. Even then, however, there will perhaps be people eager to exclaim that there is poison in the ranunculus tribe; but these will be chiefly persons who are themselves the victims of that loathsome disorder—the jealous, leprous, or Vulpine Egotism. Reticent, hide-bound natures have sometimes a peculiar hatred of minds that are fluent and communicative. So far as the dislike only leads to fair criticism of the unfair fluency of others, it serves a purpose, and must be respected for the work it does. But it is itself only a peculiarity, and has no more Divine Right on its side than the peculiarity which is opposed to it.

XI.—RECURRING IDEAS IN TENNYSON.

A POEM with a didactic intent which is allowe to control the work is inconceivable. We ma find a lesson in the poet's picture and th poet's story, but it is not from any "cat gorical imperative" that the poet begins to weave his wel In the purest and strongest poetry, which is always more o less dramatic, there is no teaching at all; the very essenc of the dramatic faculty being the capacity to suspend a criticism from the standpoint of conscience until the realit outside the poet is so fully sympathised with by him that h can reproduce it in affecting symbols. Always, the succe sion of ideas in the poet's mind depends chiefly upon linl

which are emotional and objective, the judging or discriminating faculties being kept in abeyance. But no man, out of tables of abstractions, is wholly and exclusively anything; neither wholly poet nor wholly philosopher. The essential quality of the poet's work is, that his symbols shall *cover* some philosophic truth. What he gives us is prismatic light, only it is capable of being reduced back to white light —or the work is false. But sometimes the driest philosophic intellect slides into poetry—as Locke does, for instance, in that beautiful passage so well known, where he compares our fading memories to monumental brasses on tombs; and sometimes, again, the poet becomes propositional in his manner, though always with a preponderating tendency to the use of representative imagery. In proportion as he is subjective in manner, he will incline to bring into prominence now one fact or thought of his own history and now another; and in this process there will probably be a recurring order, as there will be a gradation in prominence. I propose to take three illustrations from the writings of Mr Tennyson. Not only must this be, in itself, an interesting task, but the recurring ideas of any writer are the mnemonic links or centres of association, which make it possible for the mind to grasp his works as a whole. Not to have these links well in hand is not to read an author as he ought to be read.

I. The published poetry of Mr Tennyson does not show when his mind was first fascinated by the image of King Arthur, standing in the centre of the circle of Arthurian romance; but it is quite evident, upon the face of the poems,

comparison of the "
becomes interesting in
latter poem is concern
lie chiefly in the parts b
both inclusive. In the
bered that, after that s
which King Arthur is at
barge by the three Quee
against the crimson of the
dream:

". . . . On to daw
Begin to feel the truth
To me, methought, wh
There came a bark, tha
King Arthur, like a mod
Of stateliest port; and a
'Arthur is come again; l
And, further inland, voice
With all good things, and
At this, a hundred bells be
That with the sound I woke
The clear church bells ring i

In this dream, the
"mod

> ". . . . . the death of war,
> And one would chant the history
> Of that great race which is to be . . ."

Then they lead the way in the shallop to the "great ship" with the "shining sides," where Arthur, the poet's friend, was standing "thrice as large as man"—and then the wind wakes "music out of sheet and shroud," and the ship is

> ". . . . Steer'd toward a crimson cloud
> That land-like slept along the deep. . . ."

After this there are other cantos of which more will be said in a moment or two. There is the *one* peal of bells which is heard ringing of the "time" that "draws near *the birth of Christ.*" There is the appeal to the "rising worlds" that "lighten in the lucid east"—to "run out" their

> " . . . Measured arcs, and lead
> The closing cycle, rich in good."

This closes Canto CIV., and then in Canto CV. we have the famous invocation of the Bells, *all* the bells of Christendie. They are to "ring in redress to all mankind"—"sweeter manners, purer laws"—to ring out the "wars of old, and ring in the thousand years of peace."

> "Ring out the thousand wars of old,
> Ring in *the thousand years of peace.*
> Ring in *the valiant man and free,*
> The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
> Ring out the darkness of the land,
> Ring in the Christ that is to be."

Then, in the next canto, we have the birthday of the Arthur of the poem; in the two next, a study of his character; and, lastly, in Canto CX., the memorable verse—

Here, then, again, the
Arthur like a modern ge
and free," . . . the
the end of "war." And
impression which this con
his mind of the poet's habi
and the modern Arthur, he
in the comparison the descr
to Guinevere, in the last I
knight of the Round Table;
compare the hints given in the
king with Cantos CVIII., CIX.,
nor need he fear that the forc
the closest attention he can poss
of his minutest recollection of the

Before passing on to notice a ce
which is very frequent with Tenny
a word or two with respe
that fea

born in Bethlehem." The words which commence Canto CIII. are—not that the *festival* of Christ's birth draws near, but that

> "The time draws near *the birth of Christ.*"

Thus, the invocation to the bells, following upon the invocation to the lingering spheres, means simply, Hasten! Ring on, and on; and again and again, year after year, until at last you ring in the Christmas tide, when you shall ring in "the [birth of] . . . the Christ that is to be." With this millennial Christmas, too, comes, in the poet's thought, that "valiant man and free," that "modern gentleman" who is to restore the order of which the Round Table of King Arthur was the "symbol." Compare, in order to see how the idea of Christmas naturally associates itself in the poet's mind with the type set up by the King, the following in the "Morte d' Arthur:"—

> "For now I see the true old times are dead. . .
> *Such times have not been since the light that led*
> *The holy elders with the gift of myrrh.*
> *But now the whole* ROUND TABLE *is dissolved,*
> *Which was an image of the mighty world.*"

And then, in order to see how very very close was the parallelism in the succession of Tennyson's ideas, compare the words which follow—

> "I, the last, go forth companionless,
> And the days darken round me, and the years,
> Among new men, strange faces, other minds"—

with "In Memoriam," Cantos CIII., CIV.

". . . These are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is *new, unhallowed ground.* . . .

"We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas Eve."

II. Part of this ground let us for a moment retrace, in approaching another thought. It will lead us up to an instance of a frequently recurring movement in the mind of Tennyson. The invocation of the Bells is often quoted apart; but what I am almost disposed to complain of is, its being *detached* at all: it is vascular; it bleeds; it is a part of a living body of song that will not bear the knife; it has a human, personal meaning and beauty which it is murder to take away. A man is grieving with a "grief that saps the mind" for his friend. Christmas-tide befalls him in a new neighbourhood where all that was suggestive of the old love is wanting:—

"The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

"A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur of the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

"Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new, unhallowed ground."

On Christmas-eve the holly shall not be gathered here, in this strange land, where

> ". . . Change of place, like change of time,
> Has broke the bond of dying use."

The night is to be "spared" and "held solemn *to the past.*" But soon the "motion" which "lightens in the lucid east," suggesting both the universal morrow, *the future*, and the whole wide world on which the sun sets and rises, touches a sleeping chord of aspiration for the common good of the race, and the hundred and fourth poem, dating on Christmas-eve, ends with the words—

> "Run out your measured arcs, and lead
> The closing cycle, rich in good."

However, the heart is too weak, too saturated with its sadness, to permit just now the absorption of its own intimate and particular sorrow in the hope of a millennium for the world; though the little spark of Christmas cheer, half-sad, half glad, smoulders on unnoticed till suddenly, by one of those spasmodic transitions so common to grief and so full of hints of the heaven that lies about us, the sacred breath which bloweth where it listeth rouses to a flame the little "core of heat," and the heart leaps up with a half-shout—

> "Ring out wild bells to the wild sky!"

Let the deadliness of grief begin to die—

> "Ring out the grief that saps the mind."

These bells now no longer sound "like strangers' voices;" they are "happy bells"—

day.

Now, the second po
the frequency in Tenny
personal grief to a "
indeed, is natural, with
stance of it will be remem
fine passage beginning—

"Hide me from my deep em

And it is an attendant ech
In the "Morte d'Arthur," w
"new men, strange faces, a
upon the death of his king, Ar

"The old order changeth,
And God fulfils himself i
Lest one good custom sho

And we have the less reflective a
idea in "The Death of the Old Y
Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue a

"I hold

> "Not only cunning casts in clay:
> Let Science prove we are, and then,
> What matters Science unto men,
> At least to me? *I would not stay.*"

And then, again, that a life for the human race from which progress or the victory of goodness is excluded, is not worth its care, is a thing to be trodden under foot—

> ". . . O ye mysteries of good,
>
> "Wild Hours, that fly with Hope and Fear,
> If all your office had to do
> With old results that look like new;
> If this were all your mission here. . . . .
>
> "Why, then, *my scorn might well descend*
> *On you and yours.*"

This must needs be so, because, as the poet finds—

> "The love that rose on stronger wings,
> Unpalsied when he met with Death,
> Is comrade of the lesser faith
> That sees the course of human things."

And thus, in his love, and grief, and hope for his friend, he finds all the world involved, so that in the end he can sing—

> "Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
> Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
> Behold, I dream a dream of good,
> And mingle all the world with thee."

III. Thus far we have nothing which can be called *teaching* in the "In Memoriam;" but is there in that poem a lesson for us, distinctly put by the poet, so that we may take it in the shape which it finally assumes in his mind, as well as hinted elsewhere? I think there is.

The thing that would of all things be most frequently

present to the mind of a poet speculating on the moral aspects of things would be the conflict of impulse with law. The pangs of this conflict, in which we all share, are felt in the greatest severity by the most emotional natures, and, above all, by poetic natures. In "Ænone" there is an extremely fine passage which presents the recurring idea which I have in my mind :—

> "Self-reverence, self-l[illegible] *lf-control,*
> These three alone l[illegible] ereign power.
> . . . . . .
> . . . . [illegible]ndurance grow
> Sinew'd with acti- *grown will,*
> *Circled through* *pure law,*
> *Commeasure pe*[illegible]

Now, in the "Idylls," [illegible] who has failed in duty, exclaims at last—

> "We needs *must love* the highest when we see it."

But the conjunction of the words *must* and *love* is very unusual? Yes, it can have no meaning until "pure law" and "perfect freedom" are one, are commensurable in the soul. This can only be when we "*see*" the highest. And who can see it? Nobody ever can—it is impossible to human nature—

> "Strong Son of God, Immortal Love,
> Whom we that *have not seen* thy face
> By faith and faith alone embrace,
> Believing where we cannot prove."

All we can do is incessantly to *seek* to see the highest. It for ever and ever recedes before us. But we can and do see in the highest duty *known* to us a symbol of the *unknown*

highest—a symbol whose "power" is perpetually "raised" (if this expression may be imported from quite another sphere of thought) in proportion as we heed our obligations to it. The heart is always yearning to embrace the "highest." The intellect can indeed "prove" that the object must be real, but cannot bring scientific verification to bear upon what is infinite, so that at every fresh moment the proof has to be repeated, if intellectual confidence is to be maintained. But that is impossible, and by a compound reproductive act of the soul which is called "faith," we [are said to] "believe" what "we cannot [for every separate moment of existence] prove." Now, the vitality of this which we call "faith" depends upon the equilibrium of the emotions and the intellect; in other words, upon *self-control*. So that, having followed the mourner in the "In Memoriam" through his struggle with "the *grief* which *saps* the *mind*," up to the point at which he is happily recalled to present duty and universal love, we are not unprepared for the closing strain (CXXX.):—

> "O Living *will* that shalt endure,
> When all that seems shall suffer shock,
> Rise in the spiritual rock,
> *Flow through our deeds, and make them pure,*"

in order that we may "trust," says the poet,

> "With *faith that comes of self-control*
> The truths that never can be proved
> Until we close with all we loved,
> *And all we flow from*, soul in soul."

Now, this "until" must last for ever—we can never "close with all we flow from," *i.e.*, embrace God, who is infinite.

the highest and to see th
thing, and the indispensabl
far as we see, as if we saw.
less distinctly, in the "Vi
formally, as in the "In Me
entitled "Will," printed in th

The very great hazard wl
"moralises"—and the hazard
fineness of his faculties, the de
of his gift of expression—may b
the very speech of Queen Guin
sion has just been quoted. Tha
ral one in the lips of the ill-fat
moral *of the story*, it is absurd
lady, betrothed to King Arthur,
Lake, takes him for the king
Launcelot, she is guilty of the w
Arthur. Then comes the great
life; and

> I wanted warmth and colour, which I found
> In Lancelot—now I see thee, what thou art,
> Thou art the highest and most human too,
> Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
> Will tell the king I love him, though so late?
> . . . . . Ah, my God,
> *What might I not have made of thy fair world,*
> *Had I but loved thy highest creature here?*
> *It was my duty to have loved the highest:*
> It surely was my profit had I known;
> It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
> *We needs must love the highest when we see it,*
> *Not Lancelot nor another.*'

But, it must be repeated, the *story* will not bear this moral. It is quite true that "we needs must love the highest when we see it;" but it is *not* true that towards "the highest" a human being must feel that attraction which is the basis of the conjugal union. As I was standing in one of the Garibaldi crowds in London, on a cold, dull day, I caught sight of a poor working woman leaning on her common-looking husband's arm, and gazing up at the illustrious soldier with a countenance of beatified homage that I shall never forget. The poor woman had all my sympathy, for I thought I could have followed that soldier through the world, and died at his feet. Never did I see, in a man, so divine a face as his. But, one asked, looking at the poor, moiled woman, is her heart farther from her Jem, the joiner there, or nearer? And I concluded it was nearer. The application is obvious; or, if not, the case may be made clear by just reversing the conditions of the story in the "Idylls." Let us suppose Guinevere had been married to Launcelot, and had afterwards seen Arthur—"the highest." Would it still have been her "*duty* to love this highest?" Or is it

only the duty of *single* women to love the highest when they see it? The way out of the difficulty lies in drawing the line between the love of conjugal attraction, and the other "love" which is outside of that sphere altogether. But that the difficulty should by any possibility suggest itself to the reader is a fact which may well emphasise the remark that moralising or propositional poetry is full of risk. Illustrations not less forcible may be found even in Wordsworth, though he is, in my opinion, more successful than Mr Tennyson in fusing down his ethics into poetry.

XII.—VOICES OF THE WALLS AND CORNERS.

"THAT thou, O my Brother, impart to me truly how it stands with thee in that inner man of thine; what lively images of past things thy memory has painted there; what hopes, what thoughts, affections, knowledge, do now dwell there? For this, and for no other object that I can see, was the gift of hearing and speech bestowed on us two."

Mankind in general are quite ready to act in the spirit of this suggestion of Mr Carlyle's; there is seldom much difficulty in getting people to talk; man will even talk in an omnibus—such is the depravity of the human heart! And if, for purposes of communication, man does not find

speech an adequate medium, he flies to writing, or to printing. When his passions run high, he likes a large audience; if he cannot find a pulpit, or a platform that will have him, he takes to a stump, or a tub; if he cannot afford to print, he rushes to chalk.

Of chalk, considered as the instrument of eager public utterance, seeking a wide sympathy, sufficient has not yet been made. We hear a great deal about the liberty of the press, and its use as a safety-valve, but that kind of valve does not reach as low down as the circles in which freedom of chalk is ever operative. No respectable journal would print, even as an advertisement, the notification that "*Joe Baggs is a Fool;*" for the law of libel might be brought to bear upon such a case. But similar announcements, even more inflammably worded, may often be found chalked with a liberal and reiterative hand upon walls and palings in populous neighbourhoods. What an escape-valve to passion must such inscriptions be! Somebody is exasperated with Joe Baggs, and proclaims to the universe, as with sound of trumpet, that Baggs is a fool. Baggs has friends and acquaintances in the neighbourhood who will read this intimation. He will read it himself, on his way to duty, or to dinner; perhaps it is the very man who is now passing, for you and I do not know the personality of Baggs. If he has a sweetheart, she too will read it; and perhaps tell him of it. And what can Baggs do? If you watch a little, after a neighbourhood has broken out into a small personality of this kind, you will find in a day or two that the challenge has met a response. Baggs, also, has a lump of chalk in his

pocket, and proceeds to invite our attention to the proposition that "*Blogg is a liar.*" This is about all he can do in the way of revenge in kind. "*Blogg is an ass,*" would look too much like plagiarism; but, unfortunately, notwithstanding the traditional terrors of the word "liar," there are few men who would not rather be called liars than fools: which would you rather be, the fox that ate the goose, or the goose that fell into the jaws of the fox? However, the social atmosphere of the neighbourhood is now a little cleared, and Baggs and Blogg go about their business, each with a certain pride of publicity, and sense of an enlarged sphere of sympathy.

You may occasionally, though this is rare, find little local idylls on the walls in chalk. "*Mary Matson is a beauatiful girl.*" This I once saw, written in a stiff gawky hand on some black palings; and how, thought I, does Rosalind like this frank Orlando—probably the doctor's boy—who chalks up her loveliness for the eye of the all-beholding sun and the butcher-boy? The next day, on passing the same spot, I found an addition to the record. "*She is as deiceful as she is high,*" wrote—the butcher-boy in the bitterness of a jilted heart, was it? Probably, for the next morning, the wall presented, for my contemplation, the inevitable retort, "*You are a liar.*" And, although the "deceitful as she is high," has a very feminine ring with it, I cannot bring myself to believe that a doctor's boy, accustomed by the accidents of the profession to polite associations, would call a female a liar, even in chalk. Here, however, was a romance in little—love, rage, jealousy, hate, recorded on a garden

paling, and the pears and the apples ripening on the trees, just above the inscription, looked beautiful exceedingly. Opposite, in a paddock, a horse was snuffing at a haystack, and an old cow munching away to her heart's content.

But these things of which we have been speaking, are all personal matters. If the inscribing persons had been cavaliers a few hundred years ago, or less, they might have fought with rapiers instead of chalk. If they had writing-cases, or coteries, they might scribble out their little difficulties, or gossip them out, among their proper circles. If they were poets, they might write verses about their quarrels, or their love affairs. Or, not being poets, they might bring actions, or something of that kind. Still, we cannot but feel that there is no great principle involved in such cases.

My next illustration is of a different order. I have known a whole neighbourhood break out, in a night apparently, into denunciations of a particular form of faith: every wall and paling shouting in chalk "*No Popery.*" Or, again, taking a country walk, with scarcely a house in sight, except that whose park palings I am skirting on my way,—and that house is scarcely in sight, so large are the grounds and so thick the trees,—I come upon the same kind of denunciation —"*No Popery—Down with the Pope!*" At this moment I am crossing, perhaps, a beautiful common; the ferns are waving, the gorse is blooming golden bright, the grass is variegated with heath-flowers of every kind, and here and there little clumps of genuine blue-bell nestling under fern boughs. Now, what could put Popery into any man's head out here? For this exhibition of the prophetic impulse—

Probably about the lowest possible form of it—I try to account by supposing that the resident of the mansion is a Roman Catholic; but, on inquiry, that supposition has to [illegible]. And I am unable to discover, either, that he is a fighting Protestant, with whom the prophet might have felt a [illegible] of sympathy that drove him to chalk. Who, then, could it have been that was so forward a defender of the faith that he felt "over-ruled" to denounce the Pope on this wall as he passed? How came he to happen to have the chalk in his pocket? Does he always carry chalk for a similar purpose, or is chalk an accident of his trade? It was not a boy, for the handwriting is, decidedly, that of a man. When, then, did he do it? Did anybody ever see a man chalking up *No Popery?*

To tell the truth, I have an opinion about this little matter, and it is a very unromantic one. I attribute these inscriptions to bricklayers' labourers, and men of that sort, who naturally come in contact a good deal with Irishmen professing the other creed. You have then only to suppose a Protestant hodman going home, after a theological debate with his Roman Catholic comrades, walking along in a militant mood inflamed by beer, and pausing, half tipsy, in the moonlight, to relieve his mind by a written "utterance.' Perhaps his comrades may see it to-morrow, perhaps not; did anybody ever see *No Protestantism* on a wall? but at all events the man has spoken out; he has obeyed the "prophetic impulse." *Somebody* will be informed that there is to be no Popery, if he can help it; or if nobody, his mind is relieved, the thing is said, and "the birds of the air" may

"carry the matter." We know what the barber of King Midas did: he went and whispered the length of the King's ears to the sedges. Things *will* find speech if they can—or else what should we do for prophets?

There is something really affecting, as well as ludicrous, in these incessant struggles of people to find pulpits and publics. We cannot, of course, tell the exact opinion any given fellow-creature entertains of his capacity for enlightening or bettering the rest of us through the medium of language; but every one likes to be a giver *of something*, as has been said a hundred times. Thus, if you smile, you can afford to make the smile a thoughtful one, with even a touch of pathos in it, when you find your library copy of a book by Mr Mill, or Mr Browning, underlined at the commonplaces, and annotated in the margin with the most self-confident criticism by evidently casual hands. There is a presumption against the reader who, under any circumstances, marks or annotates a book in pencil, unless he be working at it as few readers have to work, and perhaps even then the best readers mark but little, for the simple reason that they have memories, and do not need to spoil the appearance of the pages. But the presumption is very strong indeed against the reader who makes marks on the pages of a borrowed book; for, obviously, though he may not be dishonest or wilfully unjust, he lacks the sensibility which is the first condition of all effective capacity of brain. We need not expect to find a *fine* character in the man who thinks he may do almost as he likes with a book that he has borrowed upon a subscription. Now and then, it must be admitted, one

alights upon a pencilled note in which the handwriting, as well as the thought, betrays the fact that a man of sense and feeling has been reading the book, and has been hurried by the goading *oistros* into writing on the spot the thing he wanted to say. Once I happened to find on the margin of a good book a pencil profile of a female head so exquisitely done that nobody could doubt that a great artist had been turning over the pages; probably he made the sketch in hot haste, to illustrate a point which arose in some discussion with a friend, seizing the book as the first thing that lay handy, just as he might have done the envelop of a letter.

Even those who, debarred from the use of other means of communication with the great world, the public, scribble over the margins of books are better off than persons lower down, who never see books that are likely to be preserved and passed on to the hands of others in endless succession. These, the unfortunates at the bottom of the scale, have no resources but chalk and casual stump oratory. The extent to which the latter goes on in a great city like London, is, let it be repeated, affecting as well as ridiculous. Since politics and religion are the spheres in which man most immediately and palpably acts, or is supposed to act, upon man, the eloquence of the stump is ordinarily either religious or political. Every Sunday sets free an enormous amount of impulse to speak which chalk could not help to the birth, because the things to be said are of such volume. You could no more draw out leviathan with an hook than you could chalk on a wall a stump sermon or stump oration. So it has to be spoken, and spoken it is, and with a vengeance.

If you ar
your ear is caught,
Thomas Street, by a
out of a crowd, that
by the circumstance
women. Alas, how m
frowned at me; for, up
reverent, I cannot help
my brethren!" says, or
brethren and sisters! whe
shinin' horbs above your '
.Well, I draw near. Withir
spiring and intoning vehen
along with a hymn-book.
quietly enough, just as they
unable to control my counter
are much with the poor man,
Before very many yards are pa
my ear, and, again, the voi
At the corner

could name streets in London which in the 1865 summer were, on Sunday nights, offensively *noisy* with these stump preachers. And many and many a battle have I fought for them with pursy respectability in the corner of the omnibus, maintaining that "this sort of thing ought to be put down. Damme, the churches and chapels ain't half-full; and yet the police allow these scoundrels to get up crowds for pocket picking of a Sunday night in a country like ours! There, damme, there's another!" And sure enough there is; a casual congregation which has got as far as the closing hymn, and is singing away finely.

My reply to a critic like this is seldom, I fear, conciliatory. "Why should you make such a fuss, sir," I say, "about this happening in the *streets?* What *are* the streets? Look up, there is the sky, just the same as in fields and open places. What difference does it make, that men have put double rows of brick down, and called the interspaces streets? It is all the surface of the planet, and you know who owns *that*. Do let the poor men alone!" I once said this, perhaps petulantly—for I hate talking in omnibuses—and the man to whom I said it has never spoken to me since. I am sure he thinks I am a madman. The mere hypothesis of a world without "streets" was too much for him. But I wish a few people would take it home to themselves. All this fuss about the "streets" is disgusting. Upon my word, the folks one mixes with in business seem to think everything is to be sacrificed to "order" in the "streets." For my part, I like Jack-in-the-Greens, and vans full of holiday people singing, and good-tempered mobs, and

all sorts of innocent Disorder. It is truly delightful to see a fellow-creature original enough to go and do in the "streets" something which is usually done out of them: it shows such a divine contempt for policemen, vestrymen, respectable Bumbles, and that whole mass of public opinion which thinks a well-regulated "street" the final cause of creation. Now and then, one may even meet young people who have enough of the courage of innocence to sing, or put their arms round each other's waists, in the "streets"—yes, sir, actually in the "streets." Blessings on them! And Jobson, the patriotic vestryman, with the irreproachable *ménage* and the sodden face, be —— blest, too!

The worst of political stump oratory is, that the "divinity that doth hedge" a preacher does not attach to the man who discusses in the street a new reform bill, or a brutal oligarchy, or any other commonplace for which there is no received Bible. When a man, however unlearned, talks about heaven and hell in old familiar phrases, nobody likes to stop him with a criticism. But it is quite different when his topic is one of politics. Everybody feels free to have a finger in that kind of pie. One person puts in a word, and another, and another, till the audience is broken up into knots of growling disputants, and the end is possibly a "row." Still, I have always been ready to stand up for the politician of the stump, as well as for the preacher.

What a world of fire and sincerity there must be in these men to sustain them, coarse as they may be, under the mendicancy of the oratorical start! When you and I meet

at a friend's house, it is with a clear understanding that we are to be permitted to hold forth to each other; our chairs being the stumps. But there is no such agreement between the hurrying, jostling crowd in a great thoroughfare, and the poor man with the hard hands who, perhaps alone, perhaps with a friend, stands against a fire-escape, or a pillar post-box, and strikes up *Cranbrook*. However, his spontaneous trust in the listening power of the ordinary human being is not disappointed: there is a little mob directly. What a sight that gathering of a small crowd is, to be sure! A ragged creature, whom you would rather not touch till he had been fumigated, is dragging along the gutter. Suddenly he stops, and turning his face to the pavement, breaks out—

> "As I was a wa-alking along the sea-shore,
> The lightning did fla-ash, the billers did roar;
> When by came a da-amsel, mournful and shy,
> And with her a i-infant loudly did cry."

Or, perhaps, it is a hymn. And, in one moment, the bundle of rags is hidden from you; he has got a public, and his public conceals him from the passing spectator. Just so the street preacher gets a public, though not always with quite the same rapidity. His advantage is, that on a Sunday evening there are so many pairs about, lads with their sweethearts; so that if he hooks one listener he hooks two. His disadvantage as compared with the balladist is, that though the vulgar will stay almost any length of time to listen in silence to a song, they have a horror of what they call preaching and pantile manifestations, and are apt to draw off when the hymn is over and the orator begins to

man being is well w
theatre at the east end
formed in dumb show, so
the last, or, in other wo
uttered by the actors, so in
amidst the audience, pit, bo
somebody began to sing the
house. It is true a large pro
case were Jews. The theatre
tion now present to my mind
the play of which I did not h
performed for the benefit of Mr
Miss Isaacs. You might have
ever she opened her lips for the
indifference of the people to the
may be inferred when I add that
had offended a portion of the p
pushed or carried horizontally, by h
the pit, she talking and
hearing

cited my own attention, with a certain lugubriously tragic interest of its own, is the vast amount of untutored intelligence and feeling which is always striving for opportunities of expression in the world. A little more culture, bringing with it of necessity the self-consciousness which is suspicious of becoming absurd, would put an end to a great deal of it, but not all. Who that has ever looked over the astounding miscellanies of a reviewer's table can fancy it would? In much of it there is, one may guess, but little appeal for sympathy, it is mere *writing out;* an exercise, or soliloquy; like the performance of the schoolboy who chalks his name on the door, or the murmur of the excited youth talking to himself.* But under much more, there is a real struggle for such opportunity of speech as shall bring an audience with it. It would be inhuman not to hope that the little successes of the strugglers bring some peace to their minds.

Perhaps an ingenious person might manage to squeeze a theory out of all this desultory comment upon very ordinary phenomena. Is stump oratory, or open-air speech, a genus by itself? Are there natural born gipsy preachers who would no more continue under roofs than the men who live in trees? Above all, is there a natural divarication between the classes who are inclined to write upon slate, paper, parchment, wax, papyrus, the *tablet* in general, and the classes who are inclined to write upon walls, obelisks, pyra-

* It is noticeable that you rarely meet a woman talking to herself, though one does see such a thing at times. On the other hand, women talk more in their sleep than men.

mids, sarcophagi, flagstones, temples, the *edifice* in general? A fantastic person might maintain something of the kind. In proportion as man is himself nomadic, he despises the fly-sheet, and inclines to write on the rock, the temple, or the solid earth. We need not go to Assyrians, Bedouins, or Egyptians. Under our very eyes the gipsy of the town writes upon the convenient flag, which reposes on the firm-set earth, "*I am starving*," while his sedentary brother inclines to printed circulars and begging-letters. There are traces of education in the handwriting which one sometimes sees upon the wall, even when the matter of the composition is brief as "*No Popery*,"—the prophet is a born tramp, a wanderer, a nomad; and, feeling his own impermanence, he experiences a sense of repose in leaving his thought upon a solid mass of masonry. The house-maid, who lives at the mercy of a month's warning, nomadic too in her way, poor thing, pours out her heart in pencil upon a panel of her kitchen-door. *Ed io anche—!* I never happen to stand up against a nice white mantelpiece, without feeling inclined to write upon it. Considering how many opportunities of explaining myself I happen to have in other ways, this betrays, I fear, a lingering remnant of the savage in me. As to vocal utterance, I never feel inclined to address the public off-hand in Cheapside; nor should I like to give out a hymn on the steps of the Nelson Column. When I speak in the open air, it is in the country where there is nobody to hear me. How do you feel in these little matters?

XIII.—LIGHT AND COLOUR IN THE POETRY OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

NOT even the moderation, the skill, and the self-suspicion which came, in greater or less degree, with practice in writing, can always enable a man to tell whether a fancy is worth preserving or reproducing; whether it contains—or is likely to contain—any hint or clue of truth; or even whether it is innocent, *i.e.*, whether it is free from misleading tendency of any kind whatever. The paragraphs which I am just about to rescue from a bundle of "faded leaves" must not be read as if they involved a finished speculation—though I feel that much interesting thought, of serious applicability, lies in the path

upon which these fragments of suggestion lie strewn. Nor are they good enough to be more than tolerated by the humourist or the poet. But, at all events, they may be pleasant and useful as helping to form mnemonic links of association in the minds of readers of good poetry.

Once, when I saw the electric light in an exhausted receiver—an imitation, is it not, of the northern aurora?—it struck me that that unfathomable living blue-white brilliancy, veiling itself in a pink blush, must be the colour of love. I willingly resign this for a moment to the "funny" man; there are grave reasons against my making game of this fancy, or I would do his work for him. Love, I know, is not a stone, or a shell, or a bit of wood, or a leaf, or anything that Gradgrind could classify; nor can it, so far as I see, be proved to be any way capable of reflecting the sun's rays, or the conventionally more congenial moon's. But if there is mournfulness in black, and sobriety in drab, and royalty in purple, and innocence in white, and freshness in green, and courage in red, and religiosity in blue—why not love in the auroral glory? The idea of a language of colour can be no more absurd in itself than that of a language of sound. When I was a little boy, between nine and ten years of age, I began to write an account of an imaginary flight through the solar system. Of that great work of fiction my recollections are very slight, but I remember two things about the planet Mercury—one, that I reversed the law of gravitation there; the other that I made the inhabitants communicate with each other solely by a language of colour.

From Milton we have an authoritative utterance upon the

subject of the colour of love. When Adam asks the "angel guest familiar" if there is love in heaven, and, if so, what are its modes, and how the shining ones "mix irradiance," that glorious creature of God—not privileged—which, indeed, were no privilege, to be without "shame, divine shame,"—blushes

"CELESTIAL ROSY RED, LOVE'S PROPER HUE"—

the line so beautifully commented upon (unconsciously, no doubt) by Keats in "Lamia," part I.:—

"Into the green-recessed woods they flew,
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do."

Now, we have, in that line from "Paradise Lost," enough to show us that the singer had his own idea about the colour of love. We have "love's *proper* hue," the hue that absolutely belongs to it, as a property and characteristic. Then, the hue in the poet's eye is "rosy red," the true auroral flush. And last, not least, it is "*celestial* rosy red." Now what is a "celestial rosy red?" It is white for innocence, interfused with blue for heavenliness, divineness, religiosity, and softly veiled with pink for tenderness or desire. And this is the light of the electrical aurora, which I called the colour of love; the colour you would have in a flower if you could blend the tints of the lily, the convolvulus, and the rose, but which no flower could give as it is given in the electric aurora, for want of *light* and *motion*—two elements which, in the countenance of the bashful archangel, would be supplied by the lucid eyes, and the invisible-visible shimmering motion of the muscles of the face.*

* It need not be said that a human face is never in absolute rest.

There was once an emperor—Domitian or Caligula, or somebody of that sort, it does not matter—who wished that mankind had all one neck between them, so that he might decapitate the human race at a blow. Lord Byron had a wish much more genial, but quite as wild—namely, that women

> "Had but one rosy mouth,
> That he might kiss them all, from north to south."

I, too, have often a wish, as wild as either; not so genial as that of his deceased lordship, not so cruel as that of his deceased slaughtermanship. It is very characteristic of a morbid inquisitiveness; but the wish is, in brief, this—that all adult mankind could be constituted into one accessible catechumen for me to interrogate concerning their experience. What I want for settling the psychological problems that are constantly putting themselves to me, is to know how everybody else thinks and feels. If I could only say to the collective Adam-and-Eve, How do you feel on such a point? and the catechumen could answer with one voice "I feel so and so," what a psychologist I should be! Indeed I should know too much.

If the wish were serious, the question I should now put to the monster-catechumen would go a little farther than the mere point of a natural relation between love and a certain colour. I should ask—Is an actual vision of the Celestial Light ever granted to the lover at the climax of a generous passion? I entreat the reader to bear in mind the extreme difficulty of putting such a thing into words without apparent absurdity. I can conceive it possible that a certain

emotional condition should be accompanied by a certain "hallucination" in natures of a certain degree of complexity. Only I use the word hallucination with a reserve. It is not a satisfactory word. When William Blake says he "saw" a fairy's funeral, I can make nothing of the story; but I am not content with the mere statement that he was "a visionary." However, let us take another illustration. It is quite plain that Blake saw in *light* something which the majority of human beings do not see. He saw *glory*. "Oh, that was a subjective affair." But in the first place, the same objection might be urged against my "vision" of the Niobe's daughter now on my bookshelf. And in the second, it might be urged against the painter's "vision" of colour as distinguished from a common man's. That also is "subjective," *i. e.*, a matter of peculiar sensibility on his part. But when he sees a beauty in purple that a victim of Daltonism misses, does he see Something, or does he see Nothing? If you say Nothing, why isn't He Nothing as well as What He sees?

Let us suppose it to be asserted that in that highly exalted state of the faculties which belongs to a lover, a Splendid Vision is actually possible to be experienced by the human being. How shall we test the assertion? By the quality and persistency of the testimony, and, collaterally, by the congruity of the results. Waive all speculative questions—be theist, pantheist, acosmist, or what you please for a moment—such a "vision" or "hallucination" is still possible, and its place and dignity must be judged by its ethical concomitants. We must not only have the "vision;" we must have an "interpretation" which is worthy of it.

cording

Thus far the

"

E

A

An

A

As s

Ha

I should like to

cause they more ful

what he was singin

"

And some give thanks, and some blasphemes,
And most forget; but either way,
That, and the child's unheeded dream,
Is all the light of all their day."

In "The Angel in the House" we have a fortunate, unselfish, reverent lover, and this is how the vision befell *him*. In "Maud," the lover is neither fortunate nor unselfish, and it comes to him in another way. But it comes; and, strange to say, on a dull day, too. There are other points of coincidence which I do not care to point out, because Gath and Askelon would, doubtless, find them monstrous funny:—

"Morning arises, stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare,
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,
And the budded peaks of the wood are bow'd,
Caught and cuff'd by the gale:
I had fancied it would be fair.

"Whom but Maud should I meet
Last night, when the sunset burn'd
On the blossom'd gable ends
At the head of the village street;
Whom but Maud should I meet?
And she touch'd my hand, with a smile so sweet,
She made me divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd. . . . .

"And thus *a delicate spark*
Of growing and glowing light
Through the livelong hours of the dark
Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams,
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame:
Till at last, when the morning came,
In a cloud it faded, and seems
But an ashen-gray delight."

There is something slightly pyrotechnic about the vision of Maud's lover, I fancy. That of Honoria Vaughan's is

ship-light?
light that w
The "rosy re
distinctive ch
simpler, and m
of an experien
light, as a thin
I think so; and
the cases which
riam," poem lxxx

"W
A
O
Flit

"Com
Th
The
Be lar

"When a

friend, be it remembered; no passion of his, but simply a companion:—

> "My sprightly neighbour, gone before
> To that unknown and silent shore,
> *Shall we not meet as heretofore*
> *Some summer morning,*
> *When from thy cheerful eyes a ray*
> *Hath struck a bliss upon the day,*
> A bliss that would not go away,
> A sweet forewarning!"

And here, for the present, I leave the fancy with the reader, but I have not quitted the path upon which such fancies grow, and hope to have something graver and more "rigorous" in thought to say another time.

XIV.—ONE'S OWN COCOON.

TO those who have not read Jean Paul or Ten this will be a fantastic, if not a foolish title passage which I have in my mind in Jean I cannot remember accurately enough to it; but a triplet from Mr Tennyson's "Three Voices" be sufficiently explanatory:—

> "For every worm beneath the moon,
> Draws different threads, and late and soon
> Spins, toiling out his *own cocoon*."

This is part of one of the speeches of the scoffing voic we may wrest it to a better use, and make this "sha doubt . . . . vassal unto love." It is a fact that we

habitually unjust not only to each others' cocoons, but even to our own.

Every human being, from Plato down to Simple Simon, shelters himself from what is painful in the universe by a cocoon in the shape of a system of the universe. It may seem absurd, looking at an idiot or a baby, to say that it has speculated, and possesses a scheme of things: but it does, however simple that scheme may be. Some creatures are satisfied when they have got the world on the back of the elephant, and planted the elephant on the shell of the tortoise. Less than that suffices for a baby; but the baby is just as much occupied, *mutatis mutandis*, with analysis and synthesis; with observation, classification, and hypothesis; with efforts to make the pain and the pleasure cohere as parts of one scheme—as any philosopher in the study. Sometimes you can see a new cocoon in the spinning—that is what happens when you introduce a fresh fact which breaks up the old cocoon. Races and individuals may be divided into two classes, those who spin stories for cocoons, and those who spin abstractions for cocoons. The child or the Hindoo makes a myth, and is very content with the final tortoise: the philosopher makes a generalisation, and states a law. If there were a mind which could do both things at once, such a mind would be a spinner of the Universal Cocoon.

Though in strictness every worm of us does spin a quite separate cocoon of his own, there is attraction or sympathy enough among the spinners to permit a practical grouping

of cocoons, and frequent transit from one group t
Thus it happens that every now and then we ha
spinner coming forward with a fresh cocoon—
but new in the midst of the sameness, as——l
honest, there is *no* image for this. "Imitate me
innovator—"spin a cocoon like mine; and you
sheltered from the mysteries of pain and doubt
a Leibnitz comes forward with his Monads and
established Harmony;* or a Comte with his Positiv
and thousands of human beings admire the cocoon
the like for their own protection. The true wisdom
all the cocoons in the same line and run a needl
them from end to end. If you then look through
which the needle will have made you see—what
all intended to help you see. But it is by no m
ferent which cocoon you take up with. It is at
that you adopt that which *seems* your "own cocoo

It is a disagreeable circumstance that there is a
to treat a new theory of things, or a restatement
theory, with some degree of unfairness; and it m
jectured that the majority of human beings do n
stand what a man means who offers them such a
restatement. What he really does mean is this:—
the cork-jacket which I have found useful for swin

* Of all the cocoons that ever were spun, this has, from thirte
when I first read of it, astonished me the most. I think the syste
the most *undisguisedly* futile—the most stark-naked in its incapac
one—that was ever evolved by human intelligence. This is only
but the reader can easily acquaint himself with the subject, and j
self whether this scheme is or is not such a cocoon as it appears to

universe: would you like to try if *you* can swim in it?" This is surely a very innocent thing to do. But (—excuse the transition from cocoons to cork-jackets—) so many have tried to *force* their cork-jackets upon people who complained of incapacity to swim in them, that it has become a habit of the average mind to resent the offer of a new cork-jacket of theory as an insult. The truth is, however, that if any one man can swim in any given cork-jacket there are probably a few other men who could do the same, and are even now looking out for such an article. Consider how wide a pool is the universe! There is plenty of room for new theories of things; and some of the worst that ever were constructed have done more good than harm. There is, for example, a set of men and women—one might almost say a nation—whose theory of things attributes length, breadth, and thickness to the Final Cause, and assigns to each man as many wives as he can keep. This is not a theory of things such as you and I can live by; but the people have done admirable service on the planet by reclaiming from the wilderness new territory for the use of man; and, still more, I think (though this has not yet been allowed for) by showing, practically—as practically as the Roman Catholic Church *once* did a similar thing—the possibilities of hierarchically reorganising society which yet remain untested. Upon the *desirableness* of such reorganisation it is unnecessary for me to express any opinion here. But the lesson is there, for all men to read as they run.

Though every human being has his own cocoon of theory

to spin, everybody does not make his cocoon *ostensibly* out of theory. There is heroic action as well as heroic thought, and here we are, as often as anywhere perhaps, unjust to ourselves and each other. The point to be heeded is, that we do not run into cynically levelling the moral qualities of things that are ethically of different heights; but heeding *that* caution—remembering that although to an infinite eye there is neither greater nor less, yet that only by recognising degrees can we ascend—it remains to bear in mind, especially in gloomy hours, that the *tendency* of things is to equilibrium. Regard the hero. His heroism is his own, and beautiful his "armour against fate." But what did he pay for it? What *does* he pay for it,—since he may be living on credit? In Mr Kingsley's "Saint's Tragedy," when Elizabeth lies dead, a visible recognised saint, and the end of his life is attained, he mourns like a conqueror after a battle,—like one who thinks a victory only less dreadful than a defeat:—

"The work is done! Diva Elizabeth!
And I have trained one saint before I die!
Yet now 'tis done, is 't well done? On my lips
Is triumph; but what echo in my heart?
Alas! the inner voice is sad and dull,
Even at the crown and shout of victory.
Oh! I had hugged this purpose to my heart,
Cast by for it all ruth, all pride, all scruples:
Yet now its face, that seemed as pure as crystal,
Shows fleshly, foul, and stained with tears and gore!
We make and moil, like children in their gardens,
And spoil with dabbled hands our flowers i' the planting.
And yet a saint is made. The whole is good.
Sure if the whole be good, each several part
May for its private blots forgiveness gain.
A blank dim cloud before mine inward sense
Dulls all the past. . . . . ."

Terrible words; but how often wrung from the human heart! Echoes little less keen and cruel ascend, hour by hour, from every step in the ladder of life. When we have done the thing we sought to do, we look with couched eyes backward, and see with tears the thing we have missed—the near duty left undone, the waiting grief uncheered, the humble love passed by. We did not *mean* to slight it; but we were too intent upon our own ends, and *now* we think that even if we had paused to see, and stayed to help, we should have lost but little time, and won celestial treasure. The political economy of the universe, indeed, (let the phrase pass,) is but too little studied by us. So much for so much,—there is no cheating that law of life; but we constantly go on transferring money from one pocket to the other, and fancying we are engaged in legitimate commerce. Yet we know well enough, when we reflect, that everything has its price, and that even Joy, like Victory, must be paid for. We may be too wrapt up in admiration of Lisette's shawl to ask how she came by it; but we shall probably find out some day—

"J'ai su *depuis* qui payait sa toilette!"

The lesson is, that it is never quite desirable to be so "self-involved" in our own immediate pursuit as to overlook the *how* of our winnings. We may be receiving stolen goods; or gifts wrenched by sacrilege from the altar. If a man receives from heaven the royal gift of a White Elephant—genius, or a great passion, or any other royal but consuming gift, he must, of course, feed his elephant; that is the work of his life, and the costly creature will turn and crush him if

he tries to starve it—but let him remember that the keep of the divine animal must come from somewhere, and let him see that he puts on the screw gently if he has to squeeze others. Nor let him boast of his elephant. It is quite enough to have to eat one's fellow-beings; there is no need to crow over them. And really you splendid creatures with your genius and your victories, with your white elephants of every degree, are a sort of cannibal! How much do you take out of life, in the good temper, and patient service, and watchful help of such as have no king's gifts,—without noticing how fast it is swallowed up!

"Into paint will I grind thee, my bride!"

says the painter in the fury of art. Very good; but let him remember where he got his colours from.

There is a very mild form of cannibalism which consists in our finding each other ridiculous: in laughing at each other's spinning. "What an absurd cocoon yours is, my friend; don't you see you are being laughed at?" This is a fair abstract of a good deal of criticism, social and literary; but it is very stupid, oblivious criticism. It is an axiom, which it is disgraceful to overlook, that we all, in turn, lend ourselves to the common amusement; and this should be enough to keep ridicule sweet and good-natured until an effort has been made not only to see our friend's cocoon as it is, but as he sees it. Yet it is not unusual to find such a thing as this—A tells B he is absurdly unconscious of his own absurdity,—and A thinks he has done a clever thing.

What I shall say to the exquisite A is this:—Do you really imagine, sir, that *your* cocoon is not absurd to somebody? Do you flatter yourself that you can write a hundred sentences, or talk for half-an-hour, without letting something escape you which some peer of yours will find laughable? If you do, you are a very conceited person; and you might have been saved from such a blunder by simply noticing how often you have to laugh at yourself, and yet to adhere to, or to repeat the thing you laughed at. So complicated are life and the human mind, that there is nothing which may not, in some mood or in some incidental aspect, be honestly found ridiculous by some person. But one thing, and one thing only—absurdity in which there is also wrong intent—should be allowed to excite laughter of the vulpine or contemptuous kind. Smiles we must have; laughter we must have; and we must take it in turns to furnish the occasion. He is a churl or a solemn fool who is not willing to give and take in this matter. But if any human being says he escapes paying this toll himself and is privileged to laugh the vulpine laugh at anything he finds amusing, he lies—"under a mistake." A well-worn joke, for which I apologise.

I am also willing to apologise for running this cocoon fancy so hard—it is not my way, but for once I couldn't help it. The conclusion of the whole matter is, that if each worm did not work at its own cocoon as if there were no other, there would be none at all spun; and, that we should abstain from mockery. It may seem a very light matter that one man should mock at the cocoon of another, even

when he is to all appearance quite self-involved; but I shall command the sympathy of good men and women when I say there is only one worse wrong than this form of murder; and it is punished with a swift unrelenting hand. If I do another the cruel injury of damaging his self-respect, why, then, for every grain he loses, I must pay a corresponding grain of my own faith in goodness. This is true even where the man's self-respect has attached itself to the merest self-regarding card-castle, crown of straw, or mud-pie. How much more terribly true when a man's self-respect has clung for life, with keen organic fibres, to a self-devoting end! . . . "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." They knew not what they said who spoke those words, and they thought them true; but if ever the Holy Ghost is blasphemed, it is in such speeches.

XV.—LITERARY MEN AND LITERATURE.

A FRIEND who was staying with a man of letters said one day to him, "I am very much surprised to find how much *business* there is in literature." There are few persons who, on first coming close to a literary life, would not feel a similar surprise, perhaps; and indeed it is the case all through the range of civilised occupations that the "business" of the pursuit does not strike the eye of the outsider at a distance. Just as the boy who goes to sea discovers that the life of a sailor is not what he expected, so the adult finds out upon a close approach that the studio of the painter, the book-room of the writer, and the *coulisses* of the opera, have their own

appropriate "business," which streaks the pleasant surface with lines of hard formal necessity, and, as weak people say, "spoils the poetry."

Outsiders, however, do not always draw the right lesson from this; they simply reflect that literature is not so pleasant a profession as they fancied. They *ought* to reflect, for their own guidance, as well as for reasons of charity, that the characteristics and quality of literature, as it comes before them in books and magazines, are probably much affected by conditions beyond the control of writers. Some of these are mechanical only. In journalism of all kinds, as elsewhere, space is inexorable. At the last moment it is, perhaps, discovered that something must be omitted, or abbreviated, and the best discretion that can be brought to bear upon the needful task is not always felicitous. It once happened to me to be made to say the precise reverse of what I meant, this occurring simply from an abbreviation made by the editor. Again, at the last moment, a sentence strikes the editor's mind as containing an allusion which is obscure, or dangerous, or unnecessary, and, to be on the safe side, he strikes it out. Meanwhile, the author and the reader find the connexion broken, and the force of the passage altered. To come to books, there are I will not say absolute necessities, but controlling "conveniences," of *size* which materially influence literature—as I think, for harm, and harm only. That a novel should be in three volumes, and that a book which would *naturally* fill about a hundred pages, must be swelled to three times that, with other superstitions of the kind, are controlling conditions

for which much is to be said, but the existence of which should be taken into account by readers of books, as they are certain, one or more of them, to have had *some* modifying influence on the book that lies on the table, whatever it is. Again, into the advertising of books, and especially into the advertising of quotations from reviews, enter business questions which an author rarely approaches, and which are often worked by subordinates, without the knowledge even of the publishers themselves. If anybody will try and think how *many* books a publishing house in active business brings out in the course of a year, he will readily conceive that much *must* be left to subordinates. In all these matters, and in other matters which need not be specified, there is a habit, or etiquette, or regimen, tacitly understood, and quietly working to business ends, useful and admirable in themselves. And Literature cannot be *as* it would be if there were no such regimen or etiquette at work. In that case Literature might be better or it might be worse; but meanwhile, the fact is what I say; and outsiders may reasonably be surprised at the amount of "business" there is in a literary life. There is more than any outsider can possibly know.

When I was one day complaining of languor and incapacity to write, a kind old lady who was present said to me, "Ah, I wish I had it *in* me"—tapping her spectacled brow—"it should soon come *out!*" This good old soul had, evidently, the ordinary outsider's notion of the kind of faculty which makes readable books. Folks think that "being clever" is having something inside you like an

everlasting reel of thread, which you can wind off at pleasure in proper lengths. That in order to write well, a man must refresh his experience, follow up his reading, combine and recombine his lights, or pass everything through fires of intimate thought and feeling—does not strike them. They see the product; they "'specks it growed;" and they wish they had it in them. I speak of this merely for the humour of it, not at all by way of complaint. If I *complained*, indeed, it would be of the quite disproportionate homage which literary cleverness receives in society, where duller but better things are passed by unhonoured. This homage is so excessive that I think a certain ascetic policy would (at least) do no harm, and might add somewhat to the dignity and weight of the position of the true man of letters. The extreme sweetness—sweeter it is than all things else save one—of the breath of honest praise let no man deny; but to seek it is ignoble; and if to shun it would be an ill-conditioned, suspected course, yet surely it is a duty to avoid display, and to waive off, as far as possible, excessive praise of what is *always* overpraised, (as intellectual capacity is.) I have—as will be seen in a few sentences—the keenest feeling that a writer's writing should be, must be, vital; but I have an almost equally keen feeling with regard to the *persona* of authorship. An author must only write what is true to him; his work must be real or it is nothing; but, *in giving out* what he finds true, he is simply exercising a special knack, which supplies him with the *persona*. But he himself, the man, is apart. I cannot express, though I can painfully recall, the annoyance which used to be given me by my

elders when, as a little boy, I was complimented in company upon any special knack which I had. At the present moment, I love praise as well as any man living; if my book is complimented, so much the better; and if a friend, *alone with me*, or with another friend equally near, praises me—it is well—the pleasure is more than the pain, the blush is a flush; but what conceivable degree of tact can make the half-sympathy of "society" endurable?

The same class of people—and perhaps nearly all other classes—who think "clever" men have something inside them which they can wind off from time to time like thread, have likewise a confused notion that no "dependence," as they call it, is to be placed on what a man writes; that it is no guide to his character or real nature; that, for example, a man may write like a saint, and be himself a reprobate scoundrel; and so on, all round. But this is ridiculous. The general principle that must be our guide is simply this, that *in so far* as a man's work, by its very nature, gives room for the expression of his character, in so far will his character appear in his work. It would be absurd for us (with our present faculties) to look into Turner's sunsets for a solution of the question, did he grossly neglect paternal and quasi-marital duties in a certain case?* but one can go a good way towards constructing Bacon and Edgar Poe out of their

* But I should think it quite possible, if the *labour* were worth while, to arrive at a man's religious creed, and so at his whole moral and intellectual bent, from a collection of chess problems of his own inventing. He would play, with whatever variety of manœuvre, with a uniform *logique*—and in that he would stand disclosed. In chess you may distinctly discriminate the impassioned and the unimpassioned manner of play; which is volumes in itself.

writings. The chief difficulties which occur in the attempt to "reconcile," as the phrase is, men's writings and men's careers (*as reported*—our information is, of course, always imperfect, whereas a book is completely before us) arise from *complexity* in the structure of the character, or great versatility of sympathetic power, or both together. In the case of very versatile sympathies, joined with great gifts of expression, all we can or need say is, that the mind in question will produce its best result in that precise particular in which the power of sympathy with emotion in others is *most* strongly reinforced from within. Compare, in the light of this hint, the lives and writings of Sir Richard Steele and Sir John Suckling. I will go so far as to add, boldly, that to infer from a man's books to his character is rarely even difficult, much less impossible. My own feeling is, rather, that criticism from the work to the man himself is possible to a degree which is almost indecent: certainly, that it is possible to draw conclusions too intimate and personal to be printed.

There is one more commonplace about authors and their works upon which a word or two may be pardoned. We are constantly told—though not perhaps by the highest authorities—that artists are the worst judges of their own works. For proof of this, we are referred to instances of their mistaken partialities for particular works of their own. Against these, however, must be set off far more numerous cases of just self-criticism; and we must remember to receive with many grains of salt a mere report of an able man's little passing speeches; the incalculable majority of

mankind being incapable of remembering the *exact* words of another. I do not remember on what authority, or in what precise way, Milton is said to have preferred "Paradise Regained" to "Paradise Lost;" but if, as is perhaps possible, he preferred it as being *less faulty* than the greater poem, he was justified in his preference. A sincere artist has, in by far the greater number of cases, a just critical capacity, which, when the heat of work is over, he can apply to his own performances as coolly and effectively as to those of others. Indeed, those who readily repeat the commonplace that the artist is a bad critic of his own work will just as readily repeat another which is totally inconsistent with the first. Dr Adam Clarke said that a large experience of life, with honest self-scrutiny, had taught him to think comparatively little of the praise and blame of outsiders. Just so. And the fact undoubtedly is this: the criticism of outsiders is very useful to the artist, and it is not seldom quite true and good; but, even more frequently it is useful by provoking him to ardent *self*-criticism. Do you ask how? The answer is easy. The criticism is often intelligent, but, he sees at a glance, wholly wrong; and then arises in the mind of the artist the question, how to *account* for the error into which a sensible student of his work has fallen. "This account of my performance is not accurate, but how came anybody to fall into this precise misapprehension?" In the study requisite for answering such questions, the artist "approfounds" his own work; in accounting for the errors of the observer, he learns truths which might otherwise have escaped his notice.

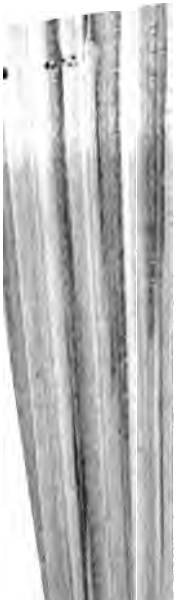
XVI.—ON FORMING OPINIONS OF BOOKS.

SINCE we are so made that we can never do an injustice either to a person or a thing without harming ourselves in the act, it were to be wished that we could deal justly with, among other matters, our books. When we have paid for them we may, if we please, do as we will with our own; but it is at our peril that we do them wrong. The friend who has dined off our mutton and our wine probably costs us as much as our book did; but though we are at liberty, or, at all events, take the liberty, to criticise our friends after they are gone home, we do not feel entitled to be unjust or undiscriminating in what we say of them. And we rarely approve each

her in judging hastily. "Perhaps we had better see him again, my dear; we might like him better next time,"—are not these household words? Then, besides the rashness of short acquaintance, there are errors of inaptitude, of inexperience, of rude indocility, of misplaced reliance, and so forth; which could never be exhaustively classified or described. A few hints may, however, be useful.

1. I am not at all afraid of urging overmuch the propriety of frequent, very frequent, reading of the same book. The book remains the same, but the reader changes, and the value of reading lies in the collision of minds. It may be taken for granted that *no* conceivable amount of reading would ever put me into the position with respect to his book—I mean as to intelligence only—in which the author strove to place me. I may read him a hundred times, and not catch the precise right point of view; and may read him a hundred and one times, and approach it the hundred and first. The driest and hardest book that ever was contains an interest over and above what can be picked out of it, and laid, so to speak, on the table. It is interesting as my friend is interesting; it is a problem which invites me to closer knowledge, and *that* usually means better liking. He must be a poor friend that we only care to see once or twice, and then forget.

2. It never seems to occur to some people, who deliver upon the books they read very unhesitating judgments, that they may be wanting, either by congenital defect, or defect of experience, or defect of reproductive memory, in the qualifications which are necessary for judging fairly of any par-



It may surprise man
bility of such a thing; but p
examples.

As to congenital defect.
viduals are born with better
"eyes" for colour, and more "t
and we willingly defer, other
decisions upon the points in q
nature the best gifted. It is qui
people who, in spite of culture, c
lives long, or unable to catch pe
round or a chimney straight, or
colour at all. What is the val
persons upon questions of the fin
of course. Now a book is in no
present purpose, from a picture o
be a good book, to appeal, in so
aptitudes of sensibility on the par
reader lacks the aptitudes wh
in poin

left out. It is as if they had come into the world with a sense short. Again, you may meet people who have no idea of humour. Allow any latitude you please for *taste* in this matter—and, of course, taste differs—it still remains true that a total absence of the sense of fun is occasionally seen in society. This is, indeed, quite a commonplace. Now, we must remember that in speaking of *qualities* we, after all, draw arbitrary boundary lines. There are many deficiencies as many as there are human beings, which cannot be labelled—compound deficiencies, so to speak, which affect the total appreciativeness of our minds to a degree which we ourselves cannot measure, though a healthy self-consciousness may keep us on our guard: and, of course, our estimates of literature, as of other forms of art, must be affected by such shortcomings in our natural make. The *staple* of the "In Memoriam" is the tender regret of faithful friendship for the friend lost—this, I say, is the staple, much as the poem contains in addition. Fortunately, this is what most human beings can enter into with ease; but suppose it were not so, how would the excepted people relish the poem? Obviously, they would lack the very first requisite for the enjoyment of it. Now, in proportion as a writer, poet or not, addresses himself to compound sensibilities, which may not yet have shaped themselves in average minds, he takes rank, no doubt, below the first order of his craft, but we need not be *unjust* to him. He has his own burden to bear; and, since writers of this kind *must* arise in times of rapid and complicated intellectual transition, we should be on our guard in forming opinions of books. For the reasons just

pointed out, we may not fully understand or like such writers, but they are perhaps fighting a battle for which our children will be the better.

It is obvious to apply the same kind of remark to our own imperfections of experience, or our peculiarities of experience. We are all very fond of telling the young who are about us that they will one day understand the wise saws in which they now see nothing; but among our peers do we lay the same thing to heart? What flashes of light do experiences of fresh emotion, such as meet us suddenly upon turning corners in our lives, often throw upon all our past store of facts! It may very well be that the book we slight, or the particular *page* we slight, is written by some fellow-creature who has happened to receive from events a quickening touch which has not yet fallen to our own lot. Poor indeed must our experience be as readers of books if we have never found a page, which once we thought empty, *now* full of life and light and meaning. True, it is the business of the artist to *make* us feel with him and see with him; some fault may be his,—and yet not all the fault. At least, he may claim that we should bring to him a tolerably patient and receptive mind, not a repelling, refusing mind; in a word, that we should treat him with decency, if we profess to attend to him at all.

Akin to defect of experience is defect of retrospective or reproductive memory—the power of feeling one's past over again. It is very common for a man to take up a book which he once admired with passion, and to find scarcely anything in it. What, then, is the natural thought, the one

that he is most likely to make? That his judgment is more mature, I suppose. Well, it may be, and it ought to be; but certainly the author of the work may claim that his reader should ask himself another question, namely, Have I lost anything in general or specific sensibility since I first read this book? I have myself had to ask this question, and to answer it *against* myself. Lapse of time *must* alter us; and we are, perhaps, too apt to fancy ourselves wiser when we are only something more hard, and something more dull. It has happened to me, indeed, to agree with a writer upon first reading; to disagree with him upon second reading, after an interval of a year or two; and then again, upon third reading, after another interval, to have to come back to my first opinion.

3. We do not sufficiently discriminate, when we speak of the reception of books, in our use of the word "public." *Which* public? There are a hundred. A square book will no more suit a round public than a square thing will go into a round hole; but if a square man shuns to read a square book because a round public has rejected it, he is clearly a loser. Again, there are small, peculiar publics, which are, notwithstanding their smallness, well worth considering. The currents of feeling, opinion, and culture, are enormous, with a thousand eddies in them; creeks and bays and little inlets where strange pleasant barks find shelter, which would be cracked or run down if they took the start in the main stream. It is a peculiar and special public which welcomes, for example, the poetry of Mr Matthew Arnold. It would never have found a welcome from a wide, rough-and-

ready magazine audience; but the books once afloat, they find their public, and their public grows. Thus the experience of bookmakers is uniform upon one point—they can rarely get anybody to see anything in their best efforts till they are printed, probably by a fluke, or a half-fluke. Then the square people fall into the square holes, and what the author knew to be good is found out to be good by a "public" which never saw anything in it before. So much for the effect of a little sympathetic excitement: if one sheep goes over the hedge the rest follow. But when an author has digested, as he may, the bitter reflections which occur to him at such a pass as this, he has probably to swallow something bitterer still: the round public—who are mere sheep, following the rest over a hedge, and who do not at all see the subtle adaptations and fitnesses which made the success of the square article with the square public—come upon the square author, and want him to do something like what he did before. The utter, utter, fathom-deep blindness which prompts this kind of demand is, in recompense, one of the most amusing things in the world. If the square writer can afford to throw away an opportunity, he declines to kill his golden goose for the round people; if not, he submits to the temptation, and his poor little productive bird is gone for ever. It has been over and over again pointed out, that to do the same kind of thing over again is a purely commercial idea, (and it never pays;) the artist-idea is to do something fresh; never to do the same thing over again; to offer up not dead things, but things in which the life is young and glowing. But what is the use of point-

ing things out? When an author has made us admire some of his works, we immediately proceed to make him the victim of his own success: we sacrifice him to a *habit* of admiration which our own weakness has allowed to grow up in our minds: we make over again the very mistake we have just repented of—till another sheep happens to go over the hedge.

4. The relation of the critic of a book, standing, as he so often does, between the author and the reader, is not always a well-considered one. The critic is, by rights, a reader with a trained mind. He is supposed to have disciplined himself to avoid the partialities of the careless or unconscious reading mind. If he has really done this, he must be a man of strong and sensitive conscience, of just that breadth and variety of culture which give a large outlook upon things in general; and, if conditions like these are to be combined in one man, that man can scarcely be youthful. Unless, however, our critic be a person who in some high degree answers to this description, he is only a man like the ordinary general reader, and his opinion of a book is a mere pack of partialities. But, of necessity, the number of critics who do answer to this description must be comparatively small. And, in fact, there must be a very large number of persons engaged in pronouncing opinions on books who have just *no* qualifications for the task. At the present time literature, in its more transient forms, is very much what school-keeping used to be, a resource for hundreds of people who have no other at hand, and the net takes up fish of all kinds, especially it takes up, in abundance, that large class of people who have

"clever" heads and common souls. Thus we constantly see reviews and essays in which the writing is as purely imitative as any copy that ever was done by a schoolboy, and in which almost every bad quality that can exist in a man without hanging or transporting him, is visible upon the very surface—mercenariness, delight in superiority, the desire to cause suffering, utter incapacity to conceive the existence of any but the lowest motives. The same description applies to large numbers of the books that are published—it must of necessity do so. When all sorts of people have acquired the literary knack, we must expect all sorts of writing. But then there is, we all know, a prestige hanging around literature. There is something about a *book* which suggests superiority, and commands, to start with, a certain degree of respect. In truth, to be able to write, as things go, no more makes a man worthy of regard or attention than a certain other species of benefit of clergy did in olden days. But if most people forget this, as they unluckily do in the case of books, they forget it still more disastrously in submitting to be guided, without any independent effort of their own understandings, by casual reviewers. The reviewer is not only a man who can write, he is a man whose office is judicial; he is supposed to be able to tell you what is good and what is bad. Yet that a man is no more a critic because he writes "clever" reviews than a man is a soldier because he carries a pretty sword, may every day be seen. There is a large amount of real critical capacity and real good feeling extant among the people who write criticisms, and it is able, in a considerable degree, to make itself attended to; but it

not only is, it *must* be the case, that a large part of the criticism which passes under our eye should be incompetent and pernicious. The persons who write it are, as to the *tone* of their minds, chiefly of the ruck; and the qualities which go to make a Hallam, a Coleridge, a Schlegel, a Lessing, are not to be picked up like stones in the street. Is every reviewer, then, to be a Hallam? No; but every reviewer should possess, in degree, and *in similar order of combination*, certain of the very highest qualities.

First and chiefly, that form of the sense of justice which is scarcely distinguishable from readiness of sympathy, or extreme flexibility of mind. If this be wanting, nothing can make a man a good critic. A sound conscience may save him from being obtrusively unjust; but it can go no further. The function of conscience, in criticism,* is first this negative one; a poor matter, but essential to begin with, like honesty and industry in every calling. Then arises, in the next place, the imperative need for this flexibility of mind, this power of taking on for a time the moods† of others. This first condition of intelligence being fulfilled, the conscience has another office to perform, much higher and greater than the first—namely, that of controlling the relation of the assumed bias of the individual and his natural bias. Thus, although these qualities may exist in conjunction with personal weaknesses, or vices, or what-not, it may truly be said that the first qualifications for the exercise of

* And all through human life, in every possible kind of *judging* of others,—of which criticism is only one.

† The word is here employed in the high sense (*e.g.*, "the Dorian *mood*.") Most people take a mood of feeling to mean a gust of feeling.

the judicial functions in literature are moral; and in the very highest order of moral qualifications too.

5. Reviewers are *generally* a hard-worked and much-imitated class of men; their power is overrated; they cannot be said to have much share in forming our permanent opinions of books; and even the share which the Higher *Criticism* has in that work is not what might, at first glance, be supposed. It is a fact that the general reception of books is like the general reception of a play; in other words, what is best falls flat; what is bad, or at all events far short of best, is received with applause. Nobody will deny that it is *invariably* the worst and the most threadbare jokes which are most generally taken up at a play. It is the same with books; a man's best must be greatly alloyed or it is not accepted by the majority of readers. This is so strictly true, that persons who have to write for certain publics know perfectly well their cue, and act upon it, unless they can afford to disregard money profit. And the cue is this: write for intelligent people, but always write what used to interest you several years ago. In other words, treat your audience as if they were ten years your juniors! Then, again, the highest qualities of *all* kinds of art, those which yield the most enduring delight, are those which depend upon unity of conception, upon the proportionate development of parts with strict reference to a certain general effect. The best humour and the best pathos are precisely of this kind, and so of other qualities. Now the characteristic of quite average minds is that they do not care for permanence of effect, and will not, *cannot*, let us say, dwell patiently upon works of art till the

deeper fountains of enjoyment wake up for them. They feel the first attraction, they think that is all, and then they are off to something new. That is their idea of reading. Hence it may truly be said not only that unity is thrown away upon them, but that it is a positive offence and stumbling-block. Let the artist make a whole as carefully as he will, the public will break it up—as the Manager tells the poor Theatre-Poet in the prelude to "Faust," each will pick out his own; just like the little child that I once saw in raptures at one of Turner's pictures—"Oh, pa! there's a rabbit!"—as, indeed, there was, and is, in the very corner. Now, to speak in parables, almost every good thing *does* contain a rabbit, and the children are welcome to admire it; but it is not cheering to reflect that, though a good writer is usually admired for what is really good in him, he is not always admired—*never* by the general reader—for his best "good." He is liked for "points," which "take."* Now here it is that critics do us an important service. It is they who, honestly studying books, and desiring above all things to grasp them as wholes, have the keenest and most enduring delight in them; and the delight is *so* keen that their utterance of it is sufficient to lift up the best books over the heads of the multitude to a true level of appreciation. It is not enough to make the best things popular, but it is sufficient to overawe the stupid, and to penetrate the outskirts of popular feeling, with a blind

* I was once talking to a lady who avowed the most passionate admiration of "Silas Marner;" but I found that her only reason was "that *beautiful* idea, you know, about the child's golden hair being his money come back!" This is a fair average illustration of the way in which good books are taken by the crowd.

sense of a great sacred sort of merit that must not be meddled with. In this way a book is, perhaps, said to be "more praised than read," as the phrase is; the presumption in such a case is, that it is both read *and* praised by good judges; read without praise by a large class besides,—a class which, if it were so indiscreet as to praise, would be found to have raised the cry of "Stop, thief!" against itself;* and scarcely read at all by the multitude. Do the multitude read the "Vicar of Wakefield?" Not they, indeed, though the cant is that they do. Thus, then, critics have a most important function to exercise in maintaining those higher levels of appreciation which are, again, kept up from age to age by the traditions of literature. For the least competent judges of all are ever ready to accept a tradition.

Perhaps, at another opportunity, I may deal with that delightful subject, the Traditions of Book-criticism, and with that of the importance, to a critical reading of books, of one peculiar, unusual form of Memory, and its equally unusual counterpart—the Anticipative Apprehensiveness. But these topics must wait.

There are some of my readers who could say much wiser and better things than any I have here said upon forming opinions of books; and there is, perhaps, not one of them

* Taking up, by accident, while reading this proof, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Letters," I find she says of Bolingbroke (19th Dec. 1754)—"I am much mistaken if he is not obliged to Mr Bayle for the generality of his criticisms; for which reason he affects to despise him, that he may steal from him with the less suspicion." Lady Mary had a bias when she wrote this, as we all know. I merely quote it as a passing illustration.

who could not and will not correct and supplement me as he goes along. By all means; there is only room in so many pages for so many things, and each must contribute his own threads of colour towards the white light. Above all things, I rejoice to think that there are readers in whom simplicity and nobility of soul take the place of faculty and culture; who choose the good without knowing why, whose libraries are a profound lesson to the keenest and most patient of critics. But these bright exceptional instances must not be used to prove too much, and it may be safely said that not one of us who really belongs to the exceptional category has any suspicion of the fact.

I would willingly add, however, a few words upon the undue sensitiveness of authors to criticism. In the really good reviewing of our own day, the accord of widely differing critics is far more striking than their disaccord, and the errors and oversights not more than might well be expected. The chief source of injustice is, undoubtedly, the intellectual bias of the critic, whoever he is; and it is, no doubt, irritating in a high degree to an author to have his book treated unjustly by a critic whose bias colours his judgment, and to feel—what is so true—that the general public know nothing about these matters. All *they* know is, that such a book has been abused in such a review. "Clever fellows these,—*such* a slashing article! what a fool the *author* must be!" That writers belonging to opposite schools sauce their criticisms with hatred and contempt, and, without intending it, tell absolute falsehoods about books, does not

strike the general reader. What does *he* know about camps of opinion, their policy, and their traditions? But authors must remember that this is, after all, inevitable, and only a copy, too, in literature of what goes on everywhere else in the world. The designs of Providence are worked out by a great deal of unscrupulous hard-hitting everywhere. In the activities of life we must not look for justice; the rough fair-play of schoolboys is all we should expect. That, I do think, we, upon the whole, are getting in literature, as elsewhere.

But apart from this, authors are, for the most part, greedy of praise, and sensitive to dispraise, far beyond what should be readily pardoned. It would greatly lessen their sufferings, sometimes, if they would be at the pains to try and account for what seems unjust in criticisms of their books? "How *came* the man to make this mistake?" In the answer to this question, as I am never weary of saying, even where the mistake is blameworthy, will often be found both guidance and consolation. But scarcely anything is more disgusting than that eagerness to be well buttered which one too often has to notice in bookmakers. Nor can I pass over without a word the silly way in which some people talk about "critics" as if they were a race of vermin all by themselves. It is surely obvious to remark, not only that critics are human beings, but that they are very often themselves authors as well as critics.

But I have, in truth, been tempted to say much more about criticism than was in my plan when I sat down to write. Into that plan—which has greatly extended under

my hand—the qualities of criticism no farther entered than as they may be supposed to influence readers in forming opinions of books. The sum of the matter is, that critics should neither be trusted, nor mistrusted, but, like authors, judged. One reads, with frequent smiles, of a mysterious being called "the critic"—who is called upon to do this, that, and the other; to be more "severe" upon novelists; to guard public morals; and Heaven knows what not—really, as if there were a Divine Right of Critics. This is just as absurd as a Divine Right of Authors—or constables.

This mysterious being is often an author himself; in many cases he is a capital fellow, and very clever. In some cases he is much more than this; but his work has, like an author's, no more claim to attention than it can make for itself; it is just as likely to be wrong as any other work whatever; just as likely to be right, and just as much requires to be checked. I do not trouble myself here with the question whether his power does not unduly exceed his responsibility, because my intention was only to say a few words to ordinary readers about Forming Opinions of Books.

Postscript.—I would earnestly beg the candid attention of readers and reviewers to this postscript.

By a mere accident in an editor's room I stumbled across a notice of the foregoing essay, in which the reviewer, in very coarse language, observed that the writer of the essay

was evidently under the influence of irritation at treat which he himself had received.

This is a striking instance of one thing referred to i essay itself—the slowness of the majority of reviewe admit the possibility of any but inferior motives. It evidently inconceivable to this critic, as perhaps it was hundred more, that any writer in a magazine should the moral courage to speak so frankly without a per motive. But why *should* it be inconceivable? The thi simple enough and natural enough.

Compared with the facts of the case, the criticism in tion is simply ridiculous for many reasons:—

1. I have been more surprised than I can express a kind treatment I have from time to time received at hands of critics. Often have I had to make the reflecti —"This man is a great deal kinder to my book th should have been myself if such a book had come befor for notice." And it does so happen that at the partic time at which my reviewer was fancying my motive was of personal irritation, I had just become aware of the e ence of some of the strongest words of praise I had received.

2. One of the very first papers I ever wrote—before I become the subject of public criticism at all—was simil character to the foregoing essay.

3. I have, from time to time, repeated remarks of kind, as opportunity offered, during the ten years for w I have been a public writer, in ways and on occasions w *animus*, as it is called, was out of the question.

I repeat, the first qualification for literature, and especially for a judicial function in literature, is like the first qualification for most other things, if not all—moral. I do not mean, I repeat, that a man should be free from fault, or even from vice, or vices; but that his conscientiousness and goodness of heart should be as considerable, at least, as his intelligence. It appears to me that the worst evils from which literature suffers arise from the fact that it is "worked" by clever and cultivated men whose characters are *common*. A man can give no greater proof of commonness of character than the incapacity to conceive disinterestedness. The tendency to attribute a thing to the worse of two possible motives is the very "note," the *characteristic* of a man of the world. This *commonness* of character it is which, united often to the best culture and really brilliant faculties, produces the portentous things which deform our current literature. If this kind of combination of faculties could be confined to its own sphere, all would be well; but that proves to be impossible, and the result is what we too often see.

The reviewer whom I have just spoken of as entirely misunderstanding my own intent, gave, in attributing vindictive motives to me, a plausible proof that he was himself ready for vindictive action. The extent to which this exists in "critical" literature is little suspected by the general reader. I am not Pharisaic or exacting in these matters myself—a man may fairly, nay justly, speak with more warmth of the book of a friend than of the book of an "enemy," or a stranger, for instance; and again, he may quite excusably *keep silence* about a book or a magazine issued by a pub-

lisher who has offended him. But what is it that constantly happens? A man engaged in journalism sends articles to a magazine, or offers books for acceptance. The articles or books are declined. Under these circumstances, he may naturally enough be angry; his book or his article may have been very good, and the publisher or editor very stupid. And, when the books or magazines of this publisher come before him for notice in the usual course of business, he may with perfect truthfulness say, "I am honestly and justly angry with these fellows, and feel that I cannot speak kindly of them and their literature." But if he has one spark of magnanimity, he will too much suspect himself to *go out of his way* to review the literature of those who have displeased him. And if—after having usually praised it—he now suddenly turns round, and, at every opportunity, attacks it, he is surely a cad—a man with a poor, thin, common soul, whatever his cleverness and his attainments may be. Now, this case is a frequent one. You may often read vindictive reviews in which the cleverness wasted in this way is quite portentous; articles in which the assumed estimate of human nature is such as one would fancy could only have been founded upon the experience of police courts.

This is a long postscript to found upon such a trifle—but the little "criticism" from which I began was really a curiosity of wrongness, and it has tempted me farther than I intended to go.

XVII.—ON GIVING WAY.

THERE is an amusing etiquette of *not* giving way, which is the subject of a common understanding among the vulgar of all ranks in society. According to this etiquette, it is highly improper to acknowledge the retributive character of suffering in one's own case; one must always be "game"—which means insolent. Suppose I unintentionally do something rude in the street or elsewhere, and suppose another person quite naturally and reasonably presumes that I meant it, and expostulates with me in terms of anger which would be just if the presumption were true; according to the code in question, I am not to apologise or to explain; I am to

return anger for anger, and may even cover myself with glory by punching the head of my critic. Again, if I am beaten in argument, if I am convincingly shown an error of my own making, it would be against the etiquette of the vulgar that I should "give way." A discussion with these people is like a prize-fight—the one that says the cleverest things, and hits the hardest, is the winner. If my opponent says that I am a very stupid fellow, I may, with applause, reply that he is an ignorant clown, even though I know him to be a learned man. If he is sarcastic, I am to be sarcastic in return. This sort of thing is, it seems, to be ranked among "the inevitable conflicts of life."

Not to be ready to "give way" in argument is, however, an astounding piece of meanness. The mortification of having to say one has been wrong is a mere drop compared with the flood of delight which attends the substitution of a new truth for an old error. But this delight is evidently one which large numbers of human beings cannot entertain, any more than they can understand the pursuit of an object for its own sake;—and I am sure, by the way, you must have noticed that any change in your plans of life is followed by applications for loans—your friends being totally unable to conceive that you can have any object in a "change" but the making of more money.

Now, the people who are the most resolute in maintaining the code of etiquette which forbids a candid retreat from a false position, are, of all people, the most infirm and irresolute in giving way when they should not. It is of *this* kind of giving way that I now propose to speak: giving way

to circumstances—to social pressure, for example—when giving way is wrong—that kind of giving way of which wiseacres tell us the young are so apt to be guilty—falling under the influence of evil company, and all the rest of it.

At a meeting of some institution for promoting the welfare of the blind, Mr Fawcett, the accomplished gentleman who is at this time (May 1865) member for Brighton, having consented (though, as a matter of taste, with reluctance) to be present and to speak, gave, in the course of his address some very interesting glimpses of his own mental history since his blindness. I am told, but I do not vouch for this, that he was instantaneously blinded by the accidental explosion of a gun. Now, what does he say? Why, that within ten minutes of the misfortune which made dark the world to him for life, he had resolved that he would be the same man that he had always been; that he would not interrupt any of his plans; that he would take up his reading from the very page at which he left off; that he would keep to his old amusement of angling; that, in a word, he would *compel* the world and the facts of his life to be as nearly as possible the same to him as they were before; and, as that was not quite possible, he would force from life compensations in many directions for his great loss in one.

Now, the vigorous elasticity of character which permitted Mr Fawcett to repel his misfortune so bravely and so happily must not be confounded with the capacity to resist the stress of mere pain of body. It is, indeed, a widely, a profoundly different thing, depending on a higher, and, naturally, a rarer faculty or combination of faculties. Almost

every musical person must have felt sometimes, in listening to a fugue, as if the bass and the tenor were threatening the soprano, and trying to drag it down and break it in pieces—one feels a sort of anxiety for the persisting treble. Will it keep up in that sweet long-drawn flute-like manner? And there is a sense of relief mixed with joy when the fight is over, and the soprano, unbeaten, goes on its way, the other parts consenting and subdued to it. But we can find a better illustration still. It is well known that in large bands or choruses there is a tendency to sink below full pitch. In ordinary Sunday congregations, for instance, where there is singing without (or sometimes *with*) an organ, the voices of the people are often a tone, or a tone and a half, below the key-note before the hymn is concluded. To some persons this is torture—not the mere falling, but the *watching* the falling. There is a beautiful story of Madame Clara Novello Gigliucci, which relates how at a monster concert (at, I think, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham) it was found, at the close of a long and trying effort, that her exquisite voice (with, I think, the first violin) had alone maintained the full concert pitch.* Now it is (in different forms according to circumstances) this resisting, prolonging power which is opposed to what I mean by "giving way," and which is exhibited in one of its best shapes in a case like that of Mr Fawcett—to whom, perhaps, I should apologise for recalling a speech which he so unwillingly made. It is a retaining power—a faculty which holds on to the past and continues

* There are many years since I read this anecdote, and my recollection of it is vague, but sufficiently accurate for my purpose.

it into the future. No doubt, some of my readers are ready to say it is merely strength of will; but they are wrong. It is more like a tenacious sensibility. There must, of course, be resolve before there can be action; but in this case, there is a passion on which the conscious resolve is founded. There is a contrivance called a self-laying railway, the wheels of the carriage depositing the rails before themselves moment by moment as they turn. The comparison is crude enough—but *such* an activity is that which certain minds exercise in relation to the past and the coming hour. They link them by throes of memory and apprehension fused in one effort. A common observer says, looking at a man of this stamp,—He walks on a bridge of Mirza,—in another moment he will find no footing, and will drop into the river of difficulty! But the traveller moves on; the bridge is not a bridge of Mirza; it is a bridge of the gods, which springs incessant under the lifted foot.

A remarkable writer of our own day, whose books abound with exquisite passages, has touched with his usual felicity, the *ordinary* experience of mankind in connexion with those angel visits of rich experience and gracious insight, in which the common work-a-day faculty by which men live becomes dæmonic; like talent or cleverness suddenly fired into genius. And what is that ordinary experience but that the angel visits are over and gone before men know that they have been face to face with travellers from the bright country?

"It is with you as it once was with good-natured housewives: fairy-folk have come while you are asleep, and have

swept the house for you and ordered it. When you wake, the house is swept, the heart is purified, even your eyes seem purged of the light of common day; but they who have done all this are gone; *the good folk vanished at the first glimpse of returning consciousness.*"* Now, the faculty of which we have been speaking is one which, of its own accord, *varies* this common experience. It is a pathetic, beautiful memory which moves, winged and active, from pinnacle to pinnacle of life, each pinnacle a pier from which the bridge of the gods springs anew for another span. Something analogous is the faculty which every writer of any vitality has constantly to exercise, especially the poet. The light comes in flashes, but he must not so express the light; he must exhibit a diffused result; so he must have a bright prevailing memory which hangs on to the vision that is past, and a bright prevailing apprehensiveness which reaches forward in the twilight to the approaching splendour. Some of us know what it is to dream the same dream again by an effort of passionate memory. This experience has happened to me more than once. I have been woke with heart-beats, in the middle of the night, by a dream of a strange exquisite perfume, or a new delightful wine, or a sight of a tumbling sea. Then, I have not remembered the taste, or the odour, (though I have the sea,) but I have had a passionate longing to catch the perfume or drink the wine again; a keen, disturbing *vacancy* of sensation has prolonged itself for many days; and, at last, my dream has returned.

The extreme rareness of the faculty in question may be

* Margaret Denzil's History, vol. i., page 199.

inferred from the all but universal distrust—and quite exceptional enthusiasm—excited by characters like that of Mazzini. That, in the midst of poverty, desertion, danger, and scorn, a man should be able to hold on steadily to a past thing which most people have forgotten, to apprehend as if it were real a remote and dangerous future, and for that future undergo what a bribe of a thousand pounds a minute would not tempt *them* to bear, is so unintelligible to most people that they have scarcely any word for such a man but humbug, lunatic, or criminal. And, on the other hand, we may notice how rare is the power of which we speak, when we turn our eyes upon the masses of our fellow-creatures, who are *what* they are chiefly because they "give way." Nothing is easier than to change the bent of an ordinary man. All you have to do is to change his company. Everybody who is not a churl knows what it is to *sink* peculiarities, and meet others upon grounds which are common as air and skies, but to a man of vivid energy this is only a truce. He abandons nothing at such times, and the great effort of existence is to take care that nothing ever slips from him in these hours that is vital. To the majority, however, social enjoyments—nay, enjoyments of a meaner kind which happen to be had cheapest in society, are bribes for which they let go their jewels, one by one, and grow downwards into lumps of acquiescent dulness. They are as imitative as sheep, and as cowardly. They lose the very idea of generous resistance. Twice in my life have I volunteered, seeing others around me in trouble, to be the first to make a movement for a change. Twice have I engaged to

run a specific risk, upon the understanding that those who had been complaining would not deny that they had complained. Twice have I run my risk, and each time have I been left in the lurch. In neither case was the matter itself serious; so much the better, and so much the worse! But after things of this sort one's mind is, for some time, I will not say indelibly, stained with images of meanness, and disturbed by suggestions of distrust.

The faculty of bearing up and holding on is, we have already said, more like memory than will, and it is, indeed, I am persuaded, most strongly developed in those who have the power and habit of thinking in pictures. If this power were a little more common (it is of no use wishing, but let us have our grumble!) some of the different situations in life would be very differently estimated; conjugal life without love, for example. In connexion with this habit of thinking in picture, a great deal of nonsense is written about myths, and the tendency of the vulgar to fancy things have happened which never did happen; but I maintain that the habit in question is either the accompaniment of peculiar and exceptional faculties, or else a late result of culture. Nor must it be omitted, that where there is a marked power of thinking in images, there is also a marked power of wiping out images. This may be doubted, but I am quite sure wide observation and careful scrutiny will confirm it. A man whose brain was a series of picture-chambers might well go mad unless he had the power of saying, "I will forget that such and such rooms exist, or such and such pictures." For the encouragement of others who may be simi-

larly situated, I will venture to speak of facts in my own experience which were in my mind just now when I declined to use the adverb "indelibly" in a place which the reader remembers. There was a time in my life when I had not acquired or developed the power which I now possess, (and which seems to me to be positively essential to existence in a world like this,) of trampling out unpleasant recollections. For many years a scene in which I had incurred blame* used to be thrusting itself up in the midst of other recollections, and darkening and degrading my life. It had a very bad knack of occurring to me when I was crossing the street, and making me cover my face, red to the temples, in the middle of the road. This was comfortable! Some day, said I to myself, I shall be run over. I read with horror the end of Mr Carker in "Dombey and Son." That kind of fate will be mine, said I; this rattlesnake of memory will fascinate me a moment too long some day, and I shall stand still, blindfold, to be crushed in the middle of the road. But a time came at last, when I felt strong enough to resolve that I would have no more of this, and I did so resolve. Every such resolution is, in my case, and probably with others, attended with a strong physical effort, a beating of the heart, a swimming of the head, and almost a suspension of consciousness. But the end of it is, that my resolve was a felicitous one. I did succeed in making my mind an absolute blank upon that particular subject, in forgetting that there was any such picture in my galleries, and that for

* Let not the kind reader start—it was a trivial matter; a *folie de jeunesse*, which most people would never have thought of a week afterwards.

so long a time that when I at last remembered it again, I did so with surprise, which was quickly followed by calm and wise thoughts about it: in the interval of repose the brain had ceased to become irritable to *that* suggestion. If this anecdote seem too intimate in its character for reproduction here, the reader will accept my apologies.

The most obvious particular in which the majority of men and women exhibit the want of resistive power is in the habits into which they slide under social pressure. It is customary to speak of this as if there were something amiable about it, but it is not sociability; it is vanity, or unwillingness to be thought not like other people, which assimilates the millions of our fellow-creatures to each other in certain minor matters. It is not any of the lowest conceivable forms of attraction or good-nature which makes a woman guilty of the degrading absurdity of a "chignon"—a knot of alien hair stuck to the back of the head. It is nothing admirable, it is sheer weakness and inability to hold up which makes men and women drop by degrees, as they advance in years and crowd together, some of the delicacies of personal reserve which youth and simplicity find essential parts of the framework of existence. It *is* a wonderful world! People seem to me to have neither eyes, nor ears, nor noses, especially no noses. How shall I speak of tobacco? It is in a small way the curse of my existence. Almost every man smokes; and as, after repeated efforts to acquire the habit, I am still made ill by tobacco, I am almost shut out of the company of men in their liveliest hours. For reasons of pure sociability, I have myself made

a effort in this matter; and how can I feel kindly to those who, out of mere vanity and the imitativeness of a monkey, are every day helping to swell the crowd of smokers, and make life more horrible than it is? You may laugh, and so do I; but it is no laughing matter. How many blooming young fellows have I known who had never touched, and vowed they never would touch, the unclean thing. I have had my hopes of them, but they have all broken down. Not an Abdiel of them all, smokeless among the smokeful. Some smoke cigars, and most talk idiotic slang about their meerschaums. Some chew *cachous aromatises*,—and some don't. Even literature smokes. Not a lady's novel in which the heroine does not affectionately "watch" the smoke of the hero's cigar ascending from that everlasting "shrubbery." You may track the lover by his latakia like the god by his ambrosia. "Ladies and gentlemen—this is *not* a comic song."*

* This is just the sort of allusion that puzzles posterity. How many obscurities of the same order are there in books that are classical! But I shall take advantage of the footnote to show novelists how love-scenes were written in the good old days. This passage is from the *Tatler*, No. 33:—"To her Country-House a Week or two after we went. There was at the farther End of her Garden a Kind of Wilderness, in the Middle of which ran a soft Rivulet by an Arbour of Jessamine. In this Place I usually passed my retired Hours, and read some Romantick or Poetical Tale till the close of the Evening. It was near that Time in the Heat of Summer, when gentle Winds, soft Murmurs of Water, and Notes of Nightingales, had given my Mind an Indolence, which added to that Repose of Soul, Twilight and the End of a warm Day, naturally throws up the Spirits. It was at such an Hour, and in such a State of Tranquillity I sate, when, to my unexpressible Amazement, I saw my Lord walking towards me, whom I knew not till that Moment to have been in the Country." Have the goodness to observe that in *this* "shrubbery" there is nothing that smells stronger than Jessamine; and that his lordship does not "finish his cigar" just as he approaches the lady!

From the "horrible Stygian fumes of the Pit that is bottomless," (is that correctly quoted from the "Counter-blast?") let us turn away; they are sure to find us out within the twelve hours; and let us admit that it is admirable for a human being to be able to hold his own. We have all moods of fluidity, no doubt. I have felt as if I should pass away *into* the grass and the sky. Weary with work, I have laid my head upon a tree and felt as if I should "fade away into the forest" in a sense other than that in which Keats used the words "fade away."* In a large assembly, too, I have had the same kind of sensation—a passion of being acted *upon*—till the consciousness of individuality is almost gone. So it is not without sympathy with ordinary impulses of this order that I am here repeating, in another shape, the old thoughts. All our best possession of ourselves, of each other, and of the life around us, lies bound up in our capacity to make permanent our approved moods by the felicitous arts which are caught by quick listeners when the breath of intellect and the breath of conscience mingling make music in the high places of life. Shall we not see that we carry away something from our triumphs, some keepsake of the festal days, some plume of purple that our better angels let fall

* When I wrote this, I supposed Keats to have had before his mind an image of himself, growing smaller and dimmer to a spectator as he slid further and further away into the forest. But on turning to the immortal Ode, I find this is a doubtful point, for the words are—

"That I might drink, and leave the world *unseen*,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:
Fade far away, *dissolve:* . . . ."

feeling that was present to my own thoughts in writing this paragraph.

in the visits that are so few? In a word, shall we not know how to make up our minds? More than one wit has said, felicitously enough, that it is chiefly small minds that are easily made up, (there being nothing of them;) but what sort of mind is that which is never made up at all? What sort of man is he who, having yesterday decided that envy is wrong, and utterly foolish from any possible point of view, allows himself to be jealous of somebody to-morrow? I do not, however, speak of what most people call fixed principles, but rather of fixed moods and appetencies. Do let us know what is good, and "stick to the little birds!" At (I think) an Episcopal dinner at Durham, a north-country farmer got hold of a dish of dotterels, and made awful havoc with them. A longing neighbour, seeing the little delicacies disappearing fast, tried to tempt the farmer with another dish. "Will you try a slice of this, Mr Cloverseed?" said he. "Na, na, thankee," replied the devoted farmer, "I'll stick to t' little birds." It is a golden, greedy story. There ought to have been more of the little birds at table; but I know a fairy that can turn a toadstool into a dotterel.

There is a form of giving way which is so general that one quite expects to be told that it is inevitable*—"human nature," in fact. I mean giving way to that deadening of the memory of the senses, and that unlinking of sense and imagination which the pressure of time and labour tend to bring about. Yet this kind of giving way does destructive

* Now-a-days, the whole philosophy of life consists in knowing what a good many people do; all you have then to do is to "accept the situation," (that is the cant phrase,) and be as polite as you can.

seen the vanity of it."

"Well, ma, I want to

is the way with the

theatre—people go an

what can be a more c

when his goblet of joy i

tion of its former fulnes

cost him! Yet the sig

forgetful fifty legislating

The man may be simply

an ascetic, with a gospel

"How vain are
How false,
Each pleasure
And every s

"The brightest t
Give but a fla
We should susp
Where we rec

This

manual labour. Their Enjoying Faculty has no Memory, you see; and yet Ducornet, handless, painted with his feet; and Miss Biffin did "everything with her mouth." Yes, they might do *something* for themselves, if they would take pains! It is inconceivable to me that any human being should be able, without feeling degraded past bearing, to look back upon raptures gone, and wish he had employed his time in something better. How little such a creature can know of the process by which, out of all sorts of material, character is built up! I have a quarrel, in this matter, even with some of the better poets. It is quite true that

> "There's not a note attuned to mirth,
> But has its chord in melancholy."

But my sympathy with the illustrious man who wrote the poem from which these lines come is rudely arrested by what adjoins:—

> "Even the bright extremes of joy
> Bring on conclusions of *disgust*,
> Like the sweet blossom of the May,
> Whose fragrance ends in must."

Boldly and emphatically, I am a stranger to all experience of this kind; and if such experience ever threatened me, I would either crush it—or myself. But I might well have spared this rhetorical flourish, for it is easy to keep off even the danger of such sad revulsions. The recipe is very simple:—*Make up your mind in your best moments, and keep on remembering that you made it up.* When you stand on a pinnacle of emotion, and see the glory of life flooding the dark corners with rosy-blue splendour,—in your supreme

it away, purple and go
with life is to conque
facts in the strength of

"And eac
Our s
And we
And n

Really, now? But spea
"choked." There must
man knows, being warne
unless he take care, bec
it only remains that he s
to be saved from the mean
life, he must work out his
in league to make one acq
out easily are ever the jeal
keep their colour.

XVIII.—THE USE OF ITALICS.

AMONG the critical commonplaces in which writers follow one another without thought, like acquiescent four-footed creatures, is that which makes the frequent use of italics a sign of weakness, or a resource of imperfect expression seeking to stamp a bluntly-moulded phrase by a mere mechanical trick. This view of the matter will not, however, bear a moment's looking at. It goes to pieces directly it is confronted with facts which may be tested in almost any book-room in England.

I take up the very first volume which is ready to my hand. This happens to be "Locke on the Understanding"—one of

the editions published during his lifetime. Locke was not a weak, feminine writer; nor was he, in spite of the inexactitude laid to his charge, an obscure one, who stood in need of mechanical tricks for making himself understood. But I find, glancing over the pages of the great essay, that italics occur with a frequency which must condemn the father of English philosophy, or rather psychology, as both weak and obscure, if the canons of the current criticism are to be my guide.

Now, in the time of Locke, typographical usage was admittedly different from what it is now, and italics were freely employed in places where they would in our day be rejected. Be it so. But what then? It is quite plain that we must add to the possible sources of frequent type-emphasis one more than the canons allow. For somebody else's mind may have, now-a-days, exactly the habit in representing to itself its own thoughts in printed signs which was the habit of Locke and the men of his time.

We shall see afterwards the rule for the use of italics which was applied in the time of Locke, (who is only taken incidentally as an illustration,) and shall have occasion to make use of it. But in the meanwhile let us turn to another great writer, some of whose works lie handy—Mr Carlyle. In his books I find, upon strict count, taking the last edition, that italics occur at least eight times in a page. Probably there are people who will be so bold as to say Mr Carlyle is obscure, but there are none who will say he is weak. I not only deny the obscurity, but I cannot even guess where it is supposed to lie. As, however, there is no Critical Tribunal

whose authority I can quote, this point must be abandoned to such as choose to claim it—if any. We have, then, got thus far:—Two admittedly powerful and influential writers, one of them undoubtedly clear, the other to be adjudged clear with but little dissentience, do employ italics in marked profusion.

But now let us look at the subject from the other side. Take Shelley. He will be called a feminine writer, if any man will; at all events, he was a writer of hysteric sensibility. Looking at his prose, however,—that wonderful, beautiful prose of his—do we find that it abounds in words italicised? Quite the contrary. Running my eye over the "Defence of Poetry," which is in parts highly impassioned, and throughout quick with an eager purpose, I observe only one word of the kind. There may be two or three—but if so my eye misses them.

Thus, then, we have advanced another step. Writers of the quality called "strong," do sometimes make considerable use of italics: and, conversely, writers of the quality called "weak," do sometimes shun italics. And so, putting together all that we have noted up to this point, we find a profusion of type-emphasis necessarily indicates neither weakness nor obscurity.

There is, nevertheless, a glimmering of truth in the view which associates the habit of verbal emphasis with weakness. The fact is, writers of very sympathetic temperament are more likely to use italics than others, just as women do it more than men; but something more is wanted than the over-sympathetic tendency. Now what is that something?

we add gesture to
when we feel strongl
cases. There are w
pitch of their utteran
on the other hand, e
and use their hands a
done depends in each
histrionic or pantomim
acter of the individual
ploys italics freely we
found not only that it w
strokes and upstrokes
pen, but that the words
written than the rest. T
cisely analogous to the st
or the thrusting forth of tl

But this by no means ex
use of italics, found, as it
sometimes an in

of italics in this case is simply saying to the reader, "Do not think I use this word casually; I use it for a purpose, which it would be tedious to indicate by a footnote or a parenthesis." The purpose is usually one of contrast, or at least, decided discrimination. Let us take an actual instance. A writer on politics happens to remark that the speeches of Mr So-and-so have "the true *scream* of the demagogue" in them. (I quote from memory.) This writer is, however, condemned for his frequent employment of italics, and is told that he evidently had not a clear notion of what he meant by the "*scream* of the demagogue," or else he would not have attempted to eke out his meaning by the emphasis of type. Now this is mistaken criticism. The writer knew very well what he meant; only he feared his readers might not take the whole of his meaning. His emphasis upon the word *scream* was a brief way of saying something like this:—"I do not mean a *roar*, which may be supposed to contain a threat; nor a *yell*, as of a chastised culprit; nor a *howl*, as of a stupid savage; but the *scream* of the demagogue; the prolonged cry of a man who, being worked-up, strains his voice so as to be heard by the *demos*, the distant crowd: I mean the scolding falsetto of a man not over-strong, whose mood is that of a woman or a partisan, and not that of a judge, or even of a decorous advocate." It is, no doubt, a great mistake in any writer to imagine that his readers will, at the mere instigation of italics, work out in detail all the contrasts he intends, but he undoubtedly gains something by the plan of which we are speaking; and surely no reader can complain of a practice

It may be n
high" are often
their short senter
of contrast as lon
bers, of the preser
juxtaposition.

In metaphysical
tive writing in gene
use italics, and gene
portion to the narro
attributable, again, to
it is a way of discrimi
the mind and eye. T
themselves to the min
on; but they can only
distinctive leading terms
by which as much as pos
ing is imported into abs
return, as

for natural landmarks to the eye are written in German text.

To say, then, that an abundant resort to typographical emphasis is a proof of weakness or obscurity of thought is manifestly wrong. It is the pantomime, or gesture, of written symbols. It is the picture-writing of plain print. It is the (sometimes, perhaps, gratuitous) precaution of a writer who wishes to pack much meaning in few words. It is the signal-flag of strong contrast. Or, it is an attempt to exhibit the terms of an argument with something like the distinctness of a diagram, in which every line, curve, point, or angle has its glaring simple alphabetic sign. On every count, the common indictment against the free use of italics is rash. Some of us would, if it were possible, put weight, sound, colour, and form into our words as they go down upon the paper. Prosaic people do not understand the emphatic impulse; do not know how the castanets go clicking in the brain of a quasi-histrionic writer. But surely we can exercise a genial toleration towards each other's peculiarities in literature as well as in society? It seems as if we could not: but certainly we ought.

It is so very difficult to remove a false impression which has existed long, and can quote authority, that a good many people will probably still persist in repeating the old commonplaces upon this subject. They will not reflect that although some women use italics overmuch, the reasons of women need not be the whole of the reasons of other people. The writing of women is more objective than that of men, and in their letters it may be discerned that they frequently

—"Mind, dear, a
the *stile.*" Or, a
evening while she
very generally, the
points of liking or d
all to be to *Freder*
yourself; and do no
To all of which it m
ridiculed for underli
discredit. They are
like to speak with eac
and these little efforts
the force of the sweet p
word, are as natural a
which we love and hono
must have a voice in t
questions of literary etiq
be.

XIX.—NAMING A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"IF the honourable member persists, I shall be compelled to name him."

"And what on earth would happen *then?*" says the reader of the *Times*, who finds the Speaker of the House of Commons using the above formula as a threat, when a member is very much out of order and obstinate in resisting milder attempts to bring him to reason.

The same question—What would happen *then?*—was, we all remember, put some years ago, when a dignitary of the Church of England was told that if he did not do something

or other in the inducting way (it was connected with the affairs of a see which need not now be mentioned) to which he was invited in the usual course by Lord John Russell, he would incur the penalties of the statute of *præmunire.*

These things have a very awful sound with them. The gentleman who had in vain tried to keep off poachers by writing up, "Man-traps and spring-guns set in these grounds," succeeded in frightening away the bumpkin trespassers when he put up the terrific announcement, "Polyphlosboiozesasseesdeteesthalassees set in these grounds." A man must, surely, stand in great peril who is threatened with the penalties of *præmunire;* or with being named by the Speaker. What is it that happens, or ought to happen, in the latter case?

I really cannot say. I do not find much light thrown upon the subject in Sir E. May's book on parliamentary practice; and, the fact must be confessed, there is not much logic, or necessary consequence of any kind, in the ordinary public proceedings of the enlightened Englishman. In a good many cases, it seems that the "named" member gets taken into custody by the Serjeant-at-Arms—who, for aught we know, conducts the culprit to a cellar, chains him to a stone, and leaves him with a jug of water, a stale loaf, and a pamphlet of an instructive character. But I cannot (I repeat) discover that there is any *logic* in the process of "naming" a member. There may, or may not be; but there may be a peculiar significance about it; which I shall proceed to suggest.

"If the honourable member persists, I shall name him," sounds as idly in modern ears as if the Speaker said, "If the honourable member persists, I shall sneeze;" but in the ears of an ancient Scandinavian, it would have been ominous. *It was a most religious belief of the Northman that if the name of a fighting warrior were spoken out loud, his strength would immediately depart from him.*

In various places and ages, something of cryptical might and meaning has, in the minds of the people, been attached to names. The Furies in Greece and Rome; the Fairies in our own island (and elsewhere); the bear among the Finns and Lapps; the cat and the weasel in Brittany, are all instances of real or unreal beings whose names it is, or was once, unlucky to utter aloud.

Let us, not stopping at the bare facts, make some slight attempt to think out the reason of them.

With ourselves a name is a mere affair of the Post-Office Directory; an arbitrary matter; an accident of the person to whom it is attached—so much an accident, that it may be changed at will as many times as the person chooses. But it is conceivable that in days when the name was really descriptive (and only indicative in virtue of being so)—was absolutely representative of the man or creature to whom it belonged—it might be felt to have a vital, organic relation to him; to be essential—*i.e.*, to be of his essence, or *esse*—like his ghost, wraith, or double. Now this would be particularly the case with any being to whom was attributed occult virtue or force of any kind—force whose basis or scope was not entirely known or understood. A god, for example,

Because to pronou
so intimate—was li
belonged; like tea
through the cloud b
the face;—uncoverin
name by a disrespect

"Not t
Of a
In aug
And

and conversely, not rud
the sweet praise and the

Now, in the rudest t
actual god. Not only so
in combat *might* be a go
the fight was undecided, fo
Supposing his Name, the
raries, to have an essential
contain

man, and to have a cryptical power in it. 3. Tradition kept up the idea of the value (validity, force) of a name, even after it had become more or less an arbitrary thing. Among the vulgar, remnants of the half-superstitious feeling indicated may still be occasionally traced by persons who (by faithfulness to impressions, and by resisting temptations to tyrannise over the minds of others) have kept their minds "sensitive" to whatever image may be thrown upon them. And two more observations will complete the little chain of suggestion which we have ventured to forge: 1. A Member of Parliament, being engaged in debate, is a combatant. 2. He has, as a representative, a veiled, cryptical, impersonal character. In virtue of that character, the honourable member for the enlightened borough of Cadville is always spoken of as "the honourable member for Cadville," and not by his real name of Snobling. In virtue of the same character he enjoys (or enjoyed until lately, for the law may be altered!) a sort of "coverture" (to use the old word applied to married women), which forbids arrest for debt. But what would it be to *name* him? The mind recoils at the thought! It would be *præmunire*—it would be polyphlosboiozesasseesdeteesthalassees! It would be to strip him of his armour: to take away his sword and buckler: to place him on the same footing of defencelessness as John Doe and Richard Roe; to change him from an honourable, unnamed warrior into an ignominiously-designated Snobling, with not an unknown quantity about him!

Is there, however, anything far-fetched in deriving a practice of the modern House of Commons from an old Scandi-

navian custom? No. On the contrary, the more one reads and thinks about the ways of the Northmen, the more one is startled with the familiar faces of modern usages—sometimes with *translated* (seldom directly varied) features, but always with exactly the same meanings. An account of an Althing debate, Speaker and all, reads just like a bit of *Times* during the session of Parliament. Some of the most striking of the illustrations which might be quoted my readers would, perhaps, hardly thank me for—they would, I can conceive, rather not have forced upon them the substantial identity of things which they very much admire with things which they would not admire at all. But I will, nevertheless, venture to ask "muscular" readers if they cannot call to mind having read in their newspapers, or at least having *seen* in their newspapers, a few years ago, a repulsive story of a "ring," which ended in a manner eminently calculated to remind one of something which is told in Eigil's Saga—namely, that Queen Gunhilda, when she was afraid the Thing was going to give a verdict against her, secretly instructed one of her train to *cut the sacred cords* which bound together the hazel-twigs that formed the doom-ring, and so put an end to the proceedings?

It is, of course, quite possible that somebody may know a single fact which will knock all this little "theory" to atoms. But it is also possible that some reader may *fancy* he does, when he doesn't. In either case, no great harm is done.

XX.—ART AND POPULAR AMUSEMENT.

I.

THERE is perhaps no form of amusement in which Art does not claim to have a share, and thus it is found impossible to get close to any question of popular entertainment without first making good one's way through outworks of cant and countercant. Vast multitudes of people have no sympathy with Art; and, deny it as they may, no sympathy with Joyousness—to which Art has ever so much to say; and these good folks, by their ignorant exclusiveness, (the ignorance being founded on defect of sympathy,) are always provoking

the other side to extravagant, superficial, unguarded, or even wholly false self-assertion. There is truth behind what they *mean*, but no vehemence of repetition, and no cunning of advocacy, can shelter from ridicule the pretence that a walk through a picture-gallery is a religious, or a quasi-religious exercise. It would be very absurd to sentence a cockney wife-smasher to six months' hard labour and pastoral symphony; and, indeed, I have a little book of moral counsel for the young in which it is seriously maintained that "the best of the tunes" *belong*, of natural right, to Rowland Hill's "Devil." My author says:—"You may probably have heard or read Shakespeare's lines in praise of music; but, depend upon it, their meaning might with more justice have been reversed. It was at the sound of the flute, sackbut, harp, psaltery, &c., that Nebuchadnezzar caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, and it was also in the midst of music and dancing that Herod granted the head of John the Baptist to the young syren, the daughter of Herodias. Frequent not, therefore, operas and concerts, nor attempt to play upon any instrument." All one-sided talk of this kind (more or less absurd) is simply the outcome of ignorance and dullness, proclaiming themselves for what they are. Minds of imperfect sensibility, which cannot therefore co-ordinate the facts of life, are totally incapable of forming sound opinions upon these matters: they may do their work as blind forces, one way or the other, but they are only blunt, honest machines after all; and an imperfect sense of Art is so commonly associated with certain forms of goodness in correct people,

that it is quite safe to look for them upon the strength of that indication alone. There are perfectly correct people belonging to distinctively religious circles who can themselves see nothing in dramatic representation, but whom it turns other people sick to see at the dinner table, or with a glass of brandy and water. Such people constantly indulge in the grossest and most repulsive "animalism," *within permitted limits*, and they keep easy consciences all the while. Now, Art involves a certain amount of display, and whatever of "animalism" it takes up must be patent. Hence, the classes who are vowed, "devoted" professionally to those forms of Art which deal most openly with the passions are at a disadvantage as compared with the others—so far as criticism is concerned.

Behind all the "cant," as it is called, of people like these, and behind all the countercant of their opponents, there is truth. It is the truth in the *counter*cant which is least often put in plain words, and with which we are now most concerned.

The tendency of civilisation is, at first, to circumscribe the activity of the passions, and necessarily (since men and women cannot regulate their lives without some degree of introversion) to quicken self-consciousness. It thus happens that the play of passion becomes a study to intelligent minds, and certain forms of human activity which civilisation throws, for a while, into the shade, become objects of curiosity to civilised people whose lives are bounded for them. In our own day of bricks and mortar and confine-

ment in cities, we have under our eyes an illustration of this in the special characteristics of our most accepted painting and poetry. The *country*—"nature"—passes from our view as a fact, and is reproduced all the more by our art,—our landscape painting and our landscape poetry. In the same way—to take an example from the stage—the pantomime of happy young life is reproduced in the ballet for crowded-up city folk, to whom the outline and action of the human form in free movement are real curiosities A similar remark applies to plot and passion—for passion, too, is a curiosity to the average dweller in towns. In proportion as the savage state approaches the civilised, men and women are born (no matter by what laws) who take the name of artists, and Art is born into society for its delight and culture—Art, which "holds the mirror up to Nature," (a truly profound expression, which a thousand ages will not mend,) and exhibits in symmetrical forms the conflict of the aboriginal forces of our common humanity.

Strenuously, and after long and anxious consideration, I must hold with those—the majority in number, and the best as well as the most numerous—who think that Art is outside of Ethics. It must not *offend* against conscience; but it has no business with it. It must not raise moral questions at all. It is the pride and perfectness of Art to be able to delight and quicken, without dictating conduct. The very first quality the artist needs—that which *constitutes* him—is the power of entering into what is foreign, and making it real to the observer. To do this properly he must neither be drawn by prejudice of approbation, nor re-

pelled by prejudice of disapprobation. Prejudice is prejudgment, and he must not judge. In the grand scheme, everything is in moral relation, but he is to paint, and not to criticise. Only it must be clearly understood that this line is absolute *in both directions*. And the application is relative. For example, a dramatic artist is not free to exhibit the career of Jack Sheppard before an audience of young people: because the young have more sympathy with pluck and enterprise than fear of the law, and thus to show pluck and enterprise directed to bad ends proves corrupting to the young. In such a case the line is overstepped, and moral questions are raised. And one more observation will, carried round the whole casuistry of the subject, be found a sufficient picklock—even if the theft or other breach of received law were an open question among mankind the artist would still be wrong. Neither in form nor in fact must his work have a leaning; it must not be weighted, one way or the other.

Yet Art of this kind, even though very imperfect, subserves a great end, in widening our sympathies, and helping us to understand our fellow-creatures. My own indebtedness to Art in this respect is so great that I cannot speak without emotion of the function, as *interpreters* of life, to shy natures, of the Novel and the Drama! However, over and above this use, there is another, far subtler, and difficult even to hint at, although an attempt may be made. The destruction of the passions nobody contemplates or thinks desirable. But, as what we call civilisation advances, a perpetual process of circumscription and readjustment goes on, which is attended with perpetual risk. Now, we all of us throw off a good deal

of the nebulous matter of imperfectly co-ordinated passion in dreams—sleeping dreams, and waking dreams—and yet there is plenty remaining to pass off and be absorbed. Here, then, Art takes up the thread, and does the rest for us. In the mimic world, in the world the real artist makes, be he who or what he may, the wildest play of passion is chastened by the need of symmetry in form, and the cloud and storm of half-disciplined passion pass away, rainbows that come and go, in the light of Beauty. They are soon gone; but they have been; and their loveliness remains with us.

This, however, is not all that Art does for us. Although the artist should not dictate rules of conduct, he cannot exist and exercise his function without contributing to life something of that element without which the observance of all rules is simply a matter of convenience. The very essence of the Art-spirit is the pursuit of an end *for its own sake;* and it is here that Art and Morals osculate; though their circles are not concentric. It is a step forward, and upward, for the mind to recognise the possibility of this spirit, however humble or coarse its working. Hence, I hold, and will maintain against all comers, that the rudest and most brutal nature is bettered, in however small a degree, by even the rudest and most brutal exhibition into which the Art-spirit enters. It is very possible that the rudeness and the brutality may be greatly in excess of the other element,—that may be only a grain of salt in a mass of abomination; but, if the grain is there, then to that extent all the persons concerned are made better. Those good people—and their name is legion—in whom the sense of beauty as a command-

ing thing is by the hand of nature left blank, will think lightly of this; but they would be wise if they made the reflection that it is just possible there may be a gap in their constitution, the presence of which may disqualify them for forming any opinion of such matters. The type of mind which I now have in my eye, is that which is commonly called the Puritan type, (though for my own part, I object to that way of naming it,) and it is, decisively, a mind with a gap in it. Its insusceptibility to what is dramatic in Art, its natural dislike of it, is one of the most puzzling and portentous facts known to me. What *is* to be done with such people? It is hopeless to talk to the blind of colours; and it is irritating enough to feel that while we, for our parts, understand them, they will never understand us. But one thing I will say, and they must make what they can of it:—Life, as exhibited by men and women whose peculiarity it is to lack strong sympathy with Art in general, and in particular with dramatic art, is peculiarly liable to be infested with faults of ugliness and meanness: and the reaction upon this display from the other side tends not only to licence, but to absolute vileness and depravation. We do not know the laws which decide the result; but the facts are certain; and, as Ugliness and Meanness produce, above all things, Disgust and Contempt, we can obtain glimpses even of the working of the laws. The reconciliation of Religion, or rather religious *organisation*, with Art in all its forms, from the highest to the lowest, is a problem that *must* be solved; and will be solved. So long as somebody feels that there is a shred of incongruity between any religious image, and the

the "sacred" side, a
want the exhibition c
fight for it till we ge
the people who are ir
to be ranged under tw
to talk of feeling the
who think it is profar
possible. *They* would
seuse to come away f
agree. I say, You
take them up,—bettere
sary,—within your bo
satisfy any mind that h
receptive eye upon the tr

Want of sympathy wit
of the sacerdotal or dog
women, when taxed with
they have answered you

applies to singers as well as listeners—how many musical "great artists" are so utterly without art that it is nothing less than torture to listen to their very best efforts! Scarcely anything is more hideous to me than some of the singing and playing which multitudes applaud, thinking all the while they have a feeling for Art!

That they have no such feeling is conclusively shown (if nowhere else) in this respect at least,—that they are, more than by anything else, offended when Art fulfils one of its most important functions. True, that precise function is difficult, and is often badly fulfilled; but it cannot be dispensed with. In the progress of that civilising circumscription of which a word has been said, there are victims made when the fresh line is drawn across the field of fact; it cuts some unprepared, yet not ignoble, life in two: the *cordon sanitaire* trips up some nature which is larger and better than the majority of the natures that are easily huddled within its bounds. And here Art is the harmoniser of the human story. It seizes upon what is heroic in such instances, and, isolating the lawbreaker, helps human nature against contempt of itself. It fixes on the tragic and beautiful in the acted casuistry of progress, and so, between heaven and earth like the prophet's coffin, or between life and death like the Cid, it keeps, suspended in a sphere of its own, that which the jurisprudence of social movement cannot admit within the circle of its approval, but which the deepest parts of our nature still more peremptorily forbid us to despise. Of Art, in this kind, *La Traviata* is a bad familiar example; Shakspeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, (or more

And it has a de
tion, of the very si
the most striking de
poses men and wom
riences, to think tl
should be limited to
like, is want of symp
youth and health ;
feeling. I know this
will be misunderstood
you are quite wrong, w
joyousness of youth ;
made is,—You haven't
fact than that odd ant
shapes, from the ball-
(called a ballet,) and sho
There are thousands of
to think of the human fo
their fellow-crea

patience with this twaddle. Dancing may be made objectionable whether on a platform or in a drawing-room; but if so, it is necessarily inelegant. It must cease to be beautiful before it can be bad; and so long as it is beautiful, it may minister to the joyousness which the filthy city tends to kill, but it cannot minister to vice. Let us take the ballet. In the ballet a great deal more of the covered outline of the human figure is visible than is visible under ordinary domestic conditions. And the difference of the conditions makes *all* the difference. The music, the scenic accessories, the isolation of the dancers, their number, the intense rapidity of the movement, are circumstances which help to bring a really artistic ballet within the sphere of the emotions, and take it out of the sphere of the passions. I remember in Fox's "Martyrs" it is said of some one who was brought forth to be burnt that, "whereas in his clothes he appeared a withered, crooked, silly old man, yet, being stripped unto his shroud, he seemed as comely a person to all beholders as one should lightly see." The quotation may not be literal, but it is justly made, and it is quite fair and pertinent to make it in connexion with the exhibition of the covered outline of the human body in the presence of certain artistic accessories. The human body in free movement under such conditions is in itself a beautiful, a highly exhilarating spectacle, and if anybody chooses equivocally to tell me that I go to a ballet to see that spectacle, I boldly say, Yes, I do—and what of it? No doubt the artistic conditions might be improved; and, as a matter of fact, most ballets contain a great deal of that which is ugly. What

can be uglier, for example, than the sort of *pirouette* that one constantly finds applauded—a laborious walking on the tips of the toes, which costs the woman such a strain of the muscles that her neck is *craned*, and her jaw *set* with the effort? If the ends of artistic beauty were perfectly consulted in the ballet, it would of necessity follow that the conditions would be so regulated that, while the spectator was delighted with the loveliness of the human body, neither the spectator nor the dancer sacrificed self-respect. But to secure this result must always be a task of such extraordinary difficulty that we must take with good-humoured allowance the best approximation we can get. We are all human, and we must keep so, and take the risks of our humanity.* But what a ballet *appeals* to is the natural sense of healthy young joyousness, which tends to express itself in the free unconscious movement of the human body, and is quickest and keenest, as all other sensations are, when the two halves of the race, the "better" half and the worse, express their feelings in apposition, so to speak.

* "And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be cross'd and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows, the fiend in angel's shape!
Thank God, no paradise stands barr'd
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said!"
—ROBERT BROWNING, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day.*

You and I in great towns do not dance Sir Roger de Coverley or Thread-my-Grandmother's-Needle on a green by moonlight, nor have we any carnivals or Bacchantic festivals. But we cannot kill out, circumscribe as we may or must, the *cultus* of the great glad aboriginal impulses. A symmetrical reflection of their play is what we expect from Art in its various shapes—poetry, music, tragedy, comedy, farce, pantomime, ballet. I have taken the ballet here, because it is in character the simplest, and because it is, on moral grounds, the most abused of dramatic exhibitions. But that the common abuse of the ballet, taken by itself, is based on a mistake, is proved by the simple fact that women delight in watching it quite as much as men: I think more. I can only say for my own part that I have talked to a lady in a tunic with no thought present to my mind that the tunic did not reach to her feet, and have met the same lady in society the next day without recollecting that I had ever seen her out of the costume of common life. "Everybody is not like you." No; but we are all much more alike than is supposed in these matters, and I believe the universal feeling of prurient people, who crowd up to Art, thinking to get pleasure out of the accessories, is that they do *not* find the pleasure, and have to retire to the old focus if they would retain the delight (as distinguished from mere pleasure) which it is the function of Art to give.

These general opinions upon the relation of Art to culture and amusement in cities, may, for practical purposes, be summed up in a very few sentences.

I. The function of Art is to chasten, while delighting, by

a symmetrical reflection of the play of human passion, ever ascending into sublimated emotion.

II. By presenting Beauty and Order as ends to be sought for their own sake, Art, though not moral, allies itself with Duty.

III. Therefore, so long as Art continues faithful to Beauty, it cannot, of itself, be inimical to Morality.

IV. The moment Art ceases to be beautiful, it becomes powerless to give Delight; it can then only confer Pleasure, which can be had better and cheaper without Art.

V. Under those circumstances, any exhibition claiming to be artistic will chiefly attract pleasure-seekers.

VI. Those pleasure-seekers would, under any circumstances, find their pleasure somewhere; so that the grain of Art which the exhibition may hold in suspension is so much to the good.

XXI.—ART AND POPULAR AMUSEMENT.

II.

THE inevitable, and prospectively salutary plebification of Art which is going forward beneath our eyes, must, like the plebification of other things, involve in the doing so much that is, to a near vision, grotesque, sordid, or even perilous, that there will, doubtless, appear an almost ludicrous remoteness in the application of these hints to an imminent public question, which may well claim to be noticed because its decision cannot fail to be a landmark in the history of civilised freedom. The question is just now fought as a

free-trade question, but no such phraseology can really cover the ground of the battle, though, for the present (1866) the commercial aspect of the matter comes to the front. Freedom of trade is the only kind of freedom which the multitude of men can be got to understand at present; and much suffering and degradation grow out of that limited intelligence of theirs. We must continue to do the best we can and lift up the first flag that comes handy (and this flag has a prestige about it, besides being handy)—for the battle will not wait; but in the meanwhile we need not be unheedful of larger, remoter issues than any which the flag of free-trade covers. Free trade, free religion, free art, and free self-culture are all bound up in the same bundle, and stand or fall together. Our present concern is with a question of free art and free trade combined.

The collision which has arisen between the masses of modern amusement-seekers and the most commandingly placed of amusement-givers, on the one hand, and the function of the Lord Chamberlain as to the refusal of his licences for acting plays in certain buildings, is a striking illustration of the way in which an almost forgotten abuse may, by a change in circumstances, come to be a serious obstruction in the way of progress. There is no reason whatever in the nature of things why "stage-plays" should be the subject of any peculiar legislation; yet nobody thought much about the absurdity of saying that two people might not, under a penalty, recite a dialogue in costume anywhere, to any people who chose to pay to hear them—until quite recently. But the moment the thing is looked on in the light of the results

it is seen to have been a source of grave public injury in a day of impatient crowds, rapid movement, and uncontrollable demands. Where or how the discrepancy first arose, or how it grew to its present size, is another question; but the fact is, that the half-cultivated population of our great cities who want amusement has enormously increased, while the drama has not overtaken their tastes, though, for the drama itself, there is still a sufficient and a largely-increased public. We all know what queer things Acts of Parliament undertake, and they will undertake queerer things still as more mediocrities find their way into the House of Commons. Between the Act of Parliament which undertakes to define a stage play, and the Lord Chamberlain's exercise of his functions, a difficulty has arisen which, from its relations, historic and philosophical, is worthy of deliberate attention.

In the time of Shakspeare, I have read that gallants smoked and refreshed themselves at the theatres just as they pleased. The habits of the Germans we all know, though I am not aware that, except at the "summer" theatres, there is smoking in theatres even in Germany. As it so happens that I am constitutionally intolerant of tobacco in any shape, I have personally no desire (but very much the reverse) that people should ever smoke in the theatres of my own country. But I stand for justice—to everybody. The habits of the English people, the masses, are no secret. They like smoking; they like eating and drinking; they have no notion of amusement without them. A small tradesman and his wife going from Chelsea to Gravesend on board a Thames steamer, begin to smoke, sip, and skin

shrimps almost as soon as the paddle-wheels are in motion. We also know (though one is surprised to see how many well-informed people underrate it) the fondness of "the common people" for singing and music—especially in company. Now, in our own day, every kind of amusement is provided on competitive and commercial principles, and paid for, to be enjoyed in masses,* and the reader does not want another word to lead him up to those strange places, called Music-halls, which all over the kingdom are filled nightly with multitudes of men and women, who, while the singing or dancing proceeds upon the stage, sit at tables or lounge about, munching, drinking, smoking, chattering, laughing—monster convivial parties, in fact, held in public, the guests being about as much known to each other as the guests at hundreds of "distinguished" balls or "receptions" in a London season. The audiences, of course, are as miscellaneous as possible, and widely different in different parts of London and the provinces. In some quarters you have a preponderance of the small tradesman and artisan element; but there is always, of course, a large infusion of the pleasure-seeking population of great cities. The entertainments given at third-rate and other Music-halls are not of a high class; they cannot be, because any approach to what is dramatic is against the law; and in these matters, as in all others, the nursing or protective policy applied in one direction, and the exclusive policy applied in the other, are found to have the usual results. The "protected" entertainment

* I have elsewhere expressed my regret that this should be so; but it is not to be helped. Above all it is not to be hindered by any act of injustice.

degrades in quality, and actually fetches "attractions" from the "unprotected." The staple of the thing *now* called at the "protected" Theatre a burlesque or extravaganza, consists of grotesque singing and dances imported from the Music-hall. The Theatre prevents the Music-hall from attempting to give anything like a dramatic entertainment. The Music-hall gets up singing grotesqueries because it must do something lively, and then it is avenged upon its "protected" enemy by the policy of imitation which the latter is forced to adopt. Really it is a ridiculous piece of business.

My readers will not suppose that I am at all dependent upon "Harry Clifton," or the "Great Vance," or the "Inimitable Mackney,"* for the amusement of my leisure, or that I can be interested, except as a student of human nature, in songs like "Pretty Little Sarah," "Paddle your Own Canoe," or any other of the songs sung at third-rate Music-halls, with titles very much like the titles I meet with in turning over music-books of the time of the Regency—such as "Go it, if it kills you," "Widow Waddle's Jig," "Betsy's Delight," or "Carlton House in a Bustle,"—from which I infer that the tastes of the lower Music-hall public are not very unlike the tastes of the "fashionable" public before I was born. But, precisely because I cannot be supposed to have any personal interest in the subject, I may the

* Posterity (what are you laughing at?) turning over my pages, will not understand these little Cockney matters, and, indeed, I ought to apologise for introducing things so much beneath the dignity of literature as some of the references in the present volume. But, probably, the Great Vance and the Perfect Cure will not feel troubled if posterity should treat them as mere chips in porridge.

more safely take up, in a passing way, a question which will some day have historic interest, and emphasise, by anecdote and comment, words of toleration, and faith in human nature, which, during the ten years for which I have been writing, I have never lost an opportunity of speaking, with various applications.

The majority of persons no doubt think of the Lord Chamberlain as the gentleman who sees that the royal hearth-rug is swept clean of a morning, and the royal sheets well aired; but the fact is that in the capital of England, where the Court is situated, Theatres and Plays, considered as actable, exist, in the last resort, by sufferance of this quasi-public functionary; who has been gaily, and not without cause (as we shall see) called the Lord Chambermaid. He may refuse his licence to any play, or any theatre—therefore, to every play, and every theatre: an absurd, but not abstractly inconceivable result. The Lord Chamberlain and his assistants may be, and sometimes are, sensible and cultivated persons, but the function personified is what I speak of, and it is one of the least credible anomalies of modern times. The Lord Chamberlain is paid out of the royal purse; is a lineal descendant of the Master of the Revels; is a relic of the days when masques and plays were in the first instance a kind of privilege of the Court, and a functionary was supposed to be necessary, to see that nothing "unhandsome" came "betwixt the wind" and the "nobility." The vulgar might have May-poles and dancing-bears, and conjuring and tumbling, but the drama was not for them—except as Lazarus might gather scraps at the door of Dives. In the

play-bills of the old patent theatres (Drury Lane and Covent Garden) the actors still describe themselves as (his or) her Majesty's servants, and seriously-disposed justices of the peace in the provinces still look upon actors as vagabonds and sturdy beggars. Great changes have arisen in dramatic matters since the two largest theatres lost their patents, but the Lord Chamberlain still remains, retaining and exercising his authority, though he is no more wanted than a censor of the press, and cannot, except incidentally, be of any use. Just conceive the existence of a functionary whose duty it should be to "examine" all pictures, and licence or refuse to licence all picture-galleries or print-shops! There can be no sense in having any such functionary for any such purpose. He may have a very nice taste of his own, but somebody else may have a nicer, and so on all round the world, till you have got the opinion of everybody—which means "the public." A play is, of all things, that which is most openly submitted to public opinion, and most rapidly and decisively judged by it. A book, if it is bad, may have dropped poison into a thousand hearts before anybody points it out, and even then it cannot be recalled from the hands of those who have bought it. But a play is submitted at once to the criticism of two thousand people of average character and intelligence, and is liable to be "damned" in an hour. If the Lord Chamberlain is less critical than the average audience, he is worse than useless; if he is only *as* critical, he is a cipher; if he were more critical, his judgments could not be enforced. He is a simple absurdity. Those who think he is useful in the

interests of public virtue must deal with the three alternatives just put, or, if they prefer it, they may deal with Milton's scornful retort upon a similar point—"Public virtue! public folly, rather—for who shall *judge* of public virtue?"

Meanwhile, there is something almost too absurd for contemplation in the exercise of certain functions by the Lord Chamberlain. Somebody writes, for example, to inform him that, in the somebody's opinion, the skirts of the ballet-girls at some particular theatre are too short. His Lordship (I suppose) goes, or sends, to see, and thenforwards an intimation to the director of the theatre that his young ladies must wear longer dresses. They manage these things worse in France,* (I have in my mind, while writing, a certain police regulation about the Cancan;) but I should think Englishmen can scarcely endure the image of an elderly gentleman whose duty it is to see that the tunics of English girls are long enough; or that they have the regulation "skirt-tacks." Pray let us have a public

* Let me say here, that I blush to the quick for some of my *confrères*—who go to Paris and come back imperialised. We are perpetually pestered with what they do "in Paris." But who cares what they do "in Paris?"—I should not be permitted to discuss the subject in a volume for general reading, but I may be allowed to add that I have definite opinions of what should be the action of the British Legislature *in view of*—I avoid the words *dealing with*—certain forms of vice. My opinion as to a particular course of action which was open to private enterprise was expressed eight or nine years ago, and a precisely similar opinion has since been expressed in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Some day, in another place, I hope to make a serious and deliberate contribution to the discussion of this subject; but I would earnestly beg all good people to try and be wise and just in their displeasure, and to refrain from supporting any plan of legislative *meddling*, whether on the Parisian or any other model. What may be done *in view of* certain facts of our crowded, heated modern life is another question.

Chambermaid for these purposes—if they can be supposed matters for any public functionary whatever. For my part, I hold them to be matters of public sentiment. "With no one to embody it?" With no one *legally constituted* to embody it. I believe public sentiment, left to itself, will always, in such matters, create a police of good understanding which cannot be evaded, while the police of a function can be and is evaded; the growth of sound sentiment being moreover retarded by the mere fact of the function's existence; for people fold their arms and feel safe when "the law" has taken a matter in hand. There is ample proof that the mischiefs aimed at, for example, by Lord Campbell's Act, are much increased by the existence of the Act. This will appear a wild statement to most people, (though I undertake to say that no great statesman, or great thinker, living will think it absurd,) and indeed I ought scarcely to let it go without explaining that I have, in all matters, very little faith in the good effects of positive laws, however "enforced." Not to pursue that, however, the effect of an Act like Lord Campbell's, or any Act of the same order, is just this—the ingenuity of the lawbreaker is at once set to work upon tasks of evasion and concealment; which, in such matters, are not difficult. In so far as concealment is secured—and in this particular case, concealment, with a little help from "science," is so ludicrously easy that the Act seems positively childish—the law proves useless. And in the work of *evading* the law, it necessarily happens that boundary lines are afresh confused, and the "evasive" form of the thing sought to be put down is diffused over an

ever-increasing surface. Those who think that anything is gained by positive legislation in such matters are, in my opinion, misled by natural indignation. When a particular culprit is punished, they are so pleased that they overrate the result. The real cure for obscenity lies in another direction. If I thought the government of a country had anything to do with making people good, I would say, the way to put down abominable things such as Lord Campbell's Act contemplates, is to have a training school for Art to every thousand of the population. People of taste may and do differ as to what is *decorous*, but I never knew a person with a feeling for Art who could tolerate anything that a jury of twelve men promiscuously chosen would call obscene or abominable. Those people who make a fuss about the universal practice in art schools must not be surprised if they are told with something like contempt that to be accustomed to see the human form under conditions remote from vulgar associations is to be educated in delicacy, and certainly to be cured of obscenity, if the cure be needed. And the cure is needed in thousands of our fellow-creatures. The crowding of life in cities results in this, that the vulgar scarcely ever think of the human being uncovered or partially uncovered, except in connexion with what they think degrading. Now, the everlasting principle of modesty or delicacy, so exquisitely put by Mr Coventry Patmore, is

> "Not to unveil before the gaze
> Of an imperfect sympathy."

And this is an individual question. A young girl with the disclosed bust of evening dress may, by the mere purity

and nobleness of her face and manner, strike awe into the mind of the rudest beast—the thing is done every day, for there are plenty of sleek beasts in good society. I do not think I ever received a stronger *casual* suggestion of the great, generous modesty of a virgin nature than I did once from a handsome young creature on the stage of a fourth-rate theatre, whose dress may be inferred when I say she was playing Paul in "Paul and Virginia." She freshened up my sensibilities for a long time, and I still think of her, and shall ever think of her, as a typical image of chastity and sweetness. I have said a virgin *nature*, for this woman wore a wedding-ring. No matter, her face had exactly the divine simplicity of the virgin. I can see her now, and hear her singing, (which was nothing particular,) and she was the sort of creature that one thanks God for having made. You do now and then see such faces and figures—I have another one in my mind's memory now, but she was in an omnibus! —and they *are* divine messages, laugh who pleases. I pity the man who has never been surprised into a passionate cry of Oh, my God! by a group of roses or a field of buttercups, or by one of those faces,—not indeed common, but common enough for our needs,—which renew to us the infinite promise of life, and perhaps remind us of the brook in "Ion," which

> ". . . . . though shapes of ill
> May hover round its surface, glides in light,
> And takes no shadow from them. . . ."

It is not rare, at all events, to see a perfectly modest-looking ballet-girl, between whom and one's-self there is the needful

"sympathy." And, in the worst case, I insist that even an alloyed admiration by a spectator of a low type is, while it lasts, inconsistent with what is obscene, and is so far an education for such as need it.

One cannot expect to go to any place of amusement, least of all to a place which is a cross between a theatre and a convivial club, and above all other places miscellaneous in the character of the audience, without being brought face to face with the abandonment of youth, eager for "pleasure;" nor can the least felicitous concomitant of the scene blot out the *grace* of youth. Being blind to nothing, I must still say that merely as a show of animal spirits and young blood, I think a place like the Alhambra* a splendid spectacle. I happened to be there on the night of the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, (1866,) when there was, I suppose, a much larger sprinkling than usual of the best youth of England: and I was powerfully moved by the beauty of the young men's faces. I was there for some hours, moving about, watching, and listening, and whatever I saw that I wished away, I left the place proud of my country; of its handsome people, and its good-humoured crowds—and though I never was in a crowd so great, I never was in one so good-humoured. Let me entreat the reader to remember that the good folks have too often an exaggerating pruriency of their own, which makes them quite unjust to mixed assemblies of human beings whose object is distinctly "pleasure." Their budgets of "depravity" will not really bear handling.

* This is the name of the largest music hall in London; but, to paraddy David Copperfield's aunt, "Why Alhambra, goodness only knows!"

Things are quite bad enough, but their pathetic nonsense will seldom stand cross-examination. In a parliamentary committee which sat some years ago upon public-houses, a witness, speaking of a certain Saloon, said he could not describe to the committee the scenes which he had witnessed there; and I once found that quoted in a magazine article by an accomplished lady who was criticising in a very noble and beautiful spirit the impurities of certain by-paths of modern life. This "sensation" answer had evidently struck her mind with horror; but what are the facts? The witness in question was asked at a later period of his examination to explain what he meant by not being able to describe the "scenes" he had witnessed. His reply was, that the character and variety of the entertainments were such as he could not describe! And how many old-bogie stories of the sort break down in a similar way when rigorously manipulated. Can anything be more absurd than what the terrified pruriency of very well-meaning people figures to itself about what "goes on" (that is a favourite phrase, *goes on*—it is so deliciously mysterious!) "behind the scenes," or the "depravity" of the ballet-girls? It is useless to disguise the fact that the scene *behind* the scene to an unaccustomed eye is full of piquancy. It cannot be unamusing, for example, to come close to half a dozen women in short muslin clouds, laughing and chattering—the usual innocent chatter of women; or to exchange civilities with a lithe young creature of nineteen, whom you never saw before and will never see again, with her bright

curls gathered up close round her little neck, in the dress of a (stage) fairy prince, or a (stage) Watteau shepherd. There is piquancy in this, as there is in smelling a flower or drinking a glass of wine, or walking up a splendid thoroughfare in the season on a fine afternoon. But the piquancy does not, with ordinary human beings, survive use; and the closer one gets to any class of one's fellow-creatures the more one is struck by their resemblance to each other, and the great excess of what is good and lovable over what is not. The prurient good people think with horror of the "orgies" or "saturnalia" that "go on" behind the unconscious curtain. Drop them down suddenly in the midst of stage "business," and they would be astonished to find that actresses are very much like their own sisters, and that visitors must—get out of the way. Again let me say there is no disguising the piquancy of the scene to certain people—but they are *not* the people who would go behind the scenes expecting to find orgies or saturnalia there, any more than they are people who think a thunderbolt ought to fall because a young girl in a short tunic stands "chaffing" a stage-carpenter for a moment.

In dealing with any class of human beings of whom we know but little, we *must* begin by dropping the old-bogie way of thinking of them, if we want to get at the truth. For my part, I repeat, I am not blind to the worst that can be said upon such matters, and when that worst is allowed for, I maintain that the good of the whole case is greater than the evil, and that these are matters in which we have, above

all things, to begin by being just. We shall never better our fellow-creatures if we commence by looking at them through the cloud of an old-bogie sensibility.

It so happens that another illustration of this subject is ready to my hand. I had once myself, along with most people, a very exaggerated idea of the amount of drinking that goes on at Music-halls. But after taking pains to observe and to inquire, I am satisfied that the total amount of what is spent in eating, drinking, and cigars is quite inconsiderable. Great stress is laid, by those who know the habits of the working and small trading classes, upon the fact that the wife is very often the companion of the husband at these places—keeping him, it is suggested, out of mischief. On the other hand, no doubt, some few wives may learn to drink themselves at such places. But, on the whole, I am compelled to believe that these monstrous *symposia* of the "people" point to changes in our manners which, after a time, will prove to be for the better. It is while eating and drinking go on that some of the first lessons in courtesy between men and women are taken by men. This may seem a light matter, but let us appeal to facts. The men who sit at those smoky little tables with their wives or sweethearts are not of fine fibre, (and at such tables sad stories may and do begin,) but they are not the men that beat their wives, and they are softened by sharing their "pleasure," as they call it, with the women. As for the women themselves, I am assured, and can well believe that the possibility of these "free-and-easy" evenings, at a place of amusement where they can be "sociable," has

opened a new world to the small tradesman's or artisan's overworked, overworried wife. And from evidence which has fallen in my way, as well as from evidence which I have sought, I believe these places do not tend to promote drunken habits, but just the reverse. There is no paradox here. These monster *symposia* are *social* meetings, remember, where men and women study and are studied of each other, where the ostensible object is not the drink, and where the attention is more or less diverted by an entertainment more or less intellectual.

Emphatically, let me repeat that, in writing thus, I do it with entire deliberation, being, as I said before, *blind to nothing*. The facts, indeed, stare us in the face. Society "devotes" its finest men and its finest women. Its finest men it drills and pipeclays, and sends away to be shot down or cut in pieces; its finest women it sacrifices in another way. At every place of public resort, from a church, or a park, or a central street, to a place of amusement, will be found the "devoted" of civilisation—drifted, drifting, and half-anchored women. Now, society may shut its eyes, or may misread what it sees; but the fact waiting to be seen or apprehended is, that its floating populations of wrong-doers of all kinds* are becoming too much for it; above all, too much for the *cordons sanitaires* which apply to such matters. I have watched modern manners, and studied records of past manners—from the Diaries of diary-writers

* I will instance the Betting Population, and the Financing Population. Is anybody stupid enough to think that all this will stop where it is, or that a casual Act of Parliament, or the casual relaxing of an Act, is of any permanent use? Half a generation more will tell a very different story!

to the Newgate Calendar of a hundred, or fifty years ago—and while I am of opinion that the public standard of goodness is almost infinitely higher than it was, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that social boundary-lines are not so sharply drawn in spheres where they are understood to be drawn (I know but little of the provinces, however) as they used to be. In other words, the old *cordons sanitaires* have snapped under the pressure of multitudes, *and we have not yet succeeded in twisting new ones. That task waits;* but, in the meanwhile, I consider it not a mischief, but a great public good, that the half-anchored, the drifting and the drifted, should not be isolated, but should find their way, like other people, into the occasional *company* (as distinguished from society) of their "betters," under the checks of public decency. *All isolation is a making of little hells.* For public purposes, it is simple English justice that, in matters which need not hurt any one except with his own choice, everybody should be presumed innocent until proved the reverse. To act on this presumption has its risks, but a risk is a less evil than a positive wrong, and the risks are more than compensated for. The two most humanising things in society are indiscriminate meeting together for purposes of worship, on the one hand, and for purposes of amusement on the other. Where a man worships, he will be told to avoid temptation; and *let* him avoid it; it is at his own peril that he seeks it; but let him not ask that the smallest unfair restriction should be placed upon the freedom of any human being for his protection. And besides all this, it must be remembered that the extent

to which the drifted population of cities floats over the bar at times is always greatly exaggerated—first, by the prurient alarm of the good; and, secondly, by the prurient conceit of *men* of another class. The fact is, that the wicked world of the wicked is not quite such a hell as they pretend, and is never hopeless; but, any way, I will do my best to write down that sort of hell which is made by liveried and branded isolation.

To pass, however, to less serious matters. I should be very glad if words of mine could help to induce others to look without prejudice upon the mere *coarseness* of the audiences, and the entertainments at some of the fifth-rate places of amusement in great cities. My own habits are those of a very quiet, studious person; I have uncertain health, and fastidious senses,—and yet I can tolerate, and with amused interest, a great deal from which some very good people (who have, let me be forgiven for saying, less natural excuse for their disgust) turn harshly away. At the "Bower Saloon," Stangate, Westminster, I have witnessed a drama called, in the bill of the play,

— "THE HUNGRY SON;
OR,
THE DREADFUL EFFECTS OF FAMILY HATRED CARRIED ON TOO LONG!"

but I also saw once, and with pleasure, a girl act Hamlet there. And very creditably she did it too, although this was

so ignorant that in the great soliloquy she said "sickled" for "sicklied." On this occasion, the house was so crowded that the gallery audience overflowed on to the sloping roofs of the boxes, and there was a ring of naked, shoeless legs dangling in pairs over the heads of the indignant dress-circle. Indeed, the excitement of the people was so great (excusably, for this girl was the only lady Hamlet I had then ever heard of, though Miss Marriott has acted Hamlet since) that a disturbance appeared imminent at one time of the evening. However, the Polonius of the tragedy came before the drop-scene between the acts, and made an angry speech, of which I caught a few words,—". . . . . policeman at the door . . . . one of you got a week the other day . . . . . disgrace the savages in the backwoods . . . . ." The remainder was lost in a storm of applause, and order was restored for the rest of the evening. Generally speaking, the behaviour of the people at third-rate and fifth-rate places of amusement has almost incredibly improved within the last six or eight years. I have been present at performances at the east-end theatres,* and at the Victoria Theatre in the south, without being able to hear one word of what the actors said. But all this is now changed. It is true you may still see in the pit of a third-rate theatre (at the Surrey you may see it) such a thing as a placard in which "persons are re-

* It has little to do with the subject, but I may perhaps be allowed to express my surprise that people are still found who risk opera at theatres in the south of London, where it is always a dead failure. In the east, it is a success; because there are so many Jews living there. I have heard *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore* at the Standard Theatre, and have been surprised, as well as amused, at the keen criticism of the pit upon the performance.

quested not to crack nuts during the performance;" and there may be an occasional squabble, and a cry for "the bobbies," (vulgar for policemen;) but that is the worst that happens. Monday night and Saturday night are, of course, always noisy nights; on Friday (the "order" night) the audience is not so "genteel;" and, of course, at holiday-times "the sovereign people" have it a good deal their own way. I was in the pit of a third-rate theatre on Boxing-night, 1865. It was an hour's work to get in, and I had to stand all the time, wedged in between two women and two or three men, who talked incessantly, and in the coarsest conceivable vein. The roughs in the place, men and women, joined in the chorus of one of the songs imported from the Music-halls into the pantomine, ("Free-and-Easy" is the name of the song,) and the "swells" in the stalls stood up and turned their backs on the stage to applaud the chanting roughs. I do not think the conversational licence taken by men and women of "the common people" at inferior theatres at all exceeds that taken in private boxes at first-class theatres; though, of course, talking in the body of the place is more objectionable to *listeners*, and the *tournure* of the phrases is not so elegant. Let me take the liberty of supposing that you are in the pit of a fifth-rate theatre, and listening to what goes on behind you or at your side, where there is a household party—a tradesman, his wife, a friend of the family, and his sweetheart. This is the kind of thing you might hear, as a "comic" actor came forward with an absurd make-up:—

First Gentleman.—Oh! golley; ain't he a reg'lar Cure!

His Wife.—Now, then, Joe-in-the-copper, speak up; will you?

Second Gentleman.—Gawdstruth,* ain't he a bubblyjock!

Sweetheart.—Oh my, jiminy! he *is* a head o' cauliflower!

This is not edifying; but you can well believe in the solid virtues of people who are capable of such felicities. By and by the conversation is resumed:—

Second Gentleman.—Have you seen Ovinnia† Jones—*East Lynne?*

Sweetheart.—No; not yet.

Second Gentleman.—Ah, you've *got* to, I can tell you! I cried like a water-cart when the kid dies—it is cutting, I can tell you!

Mamma.—Ropes of inions?

Gentleman.—Ah, it *is* inions, that is!

Sweetheart.—I s'pose it's a very deep tradegy? [*Spoken with critical gravity, you having somehow betrayed that you are listening.*]

Gentleman.—[*Evading the high-art question.*] I ain't cried so much—not since I see *Belphegor.* I'll take you to see her.

This is delivered with an air of patronage which would

* This adjuration is, in nine cases out of ten, employed by the poor with no more idea of the meaning than they would have of the meaning of 'sounds.

† That was vulgar for Miss Avonia Jones, an actress of the day with a conspicuously fine shoulder. This is for the benefit of posterity again; but posterity will scarcely require to be told that, in my day, it was impossible for "the common people" not to alter a name. They turn Reynolds into Randles, Albert into Albert, Nine Elms into Nine Ellums, Alexandra into Alexandria, omnibus into omminibus, and Westminster into Westminister. Who would grudge them a pleasure so innocent?

not disgrace a Sultan; and then the happy pair fall to upon their provisions, and flakes of piecrust fall, like rose-leaves, at the feet of the lovers as they munch. Some commonplace question is asked of you, which you answer with civility, and then, rising to depart, you have the satisfaction of hearing yourself called, in a whisper, "a affable gent."

Some years ago I went one night to a place of cheap entertainment called the Rotunda, in the Blackfriars Road, near the bridge. It is now, I believe, a fire-stove shop, the little circus having been put down as a nuisance; but I lay no stress upon *that* fact, for the ordinary, respectable Englishman, especially the English shopkeeper, calls nearly everything unusual a nuisance, and particularly anything that gathers a mob of roughs together. That roughs frequented this Rotunda I know, for I saw and heard them "roughing" on the night of my visit, and I do not doubt that thieves and ill-conditioned people of all sorts were there; but the audience behaved as well as any audience could possibly behave, and one could hardly help being glad at heart to see them sitting there so quietly, out of mischief for the time, and getting the benefit of even so low a form of Art. There was solo singing in "character," (a cobbler, a Scotchman, an Irishman, very coarse, but with no real harm about either the song or the characterisation,) solo dancing, a rope performance, and a *ballet d'action*. A *ballet d'action* —that is to say—a ballet in which there is a story, as distinguished from a *ballet divertissement*, in which there is (supposed to be) none—is, without the Lord Chamberlain's licence, illegal; but my friends of the Rotunda evidently

thought they were keeping sufficiently to windward of the law by avoiding dialogue, for the story of this ballet was told in the most undisguised manner by the mere action; though, for the assistance of slack wits, it was told in black and white also. The stage-manager, at every turn of the plot, held up in front of the stage a placard to say what was happening, as—

SHE IS JEALOUS,

or—

HE ENLISTS FOR A SOLDIER,

or—

THEY ARE TO BE MARRIED TO-MORROW.

This last notification was received with tremendous applause. As is universally the case at the low-class theatres, even more than at the better sort, I found the audience had their *old* favourites. A half-withered, moiled-looking woman of fifty odd, who danced in the ballet, was received and pursued with storms of clapping and compliment—"Condemn my sanguinary organs of vision! the old girl stuck to it, didn't she, Bill?" The performance closed with a little exhibition on the tight-rope, in which the clown, a quiet, decent, worn-looking man of about thirty, and his very lovely young wife took part. I shall never forget the exquisitely-turned limbs of this little woman. The rope on which she had to walk went straight across the pit until it attached itself to a fastening in the boxes, or gallery, so that this pretty creature had to walk clean over the heads of the people in the pit—over mine among the rest. Her husband, proud, I am sure, of her beauty, followed her transit with

jealous eyes; but it was unnecessary. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*—it was a chivalric pit. As for me, I believe I was suspected of being a spy—though I hummed nigger tunes, and jested with my neighbours, in order to put them as much at their ease as possible.

My success, however, was not satisfactory to my own mind; and the next time I visited a "gaff"—this was in Shoreditch—I sought, and obtained for the sum of fourpence, a private box all to myself. The premises were so confined that, in coming out, I lost my way, after having taken only a step or two, into somebody's back parlour where there were plates and dishes set on a clean table-cloth, all ready for supper. There was no smell of cooking about, but that is nothing; the neighbourhood is a paradise of fried fish, baked potatoes, whelks, eels, cockles, mutton-pies, cranberry tarts, pig's trotters, and "faggots."* At this place there was no ballet. The audience was what you might expect. There were fiddlers, with a clarionet, a flute, and a piano in the very last stage of knockiness—every bit of baize having evidently been worn off the furrowed keys. This delicious instrument, retained perhaps for the purpose of giving a refined air to the entertainment, was feverishly played by a bald-headed, little old man, who had so respectable an appearance that I wondered how he had drifted into

* I will not assume the responsibility of recommending any one to *eat* a faggot, but the *smell* is delicious. It is the night-policeman's joy! "Does your husband sleep, when he comes home at six in broad daylight?" said I to a policeman's wife, once. "Law, yes, sir," said she, "I stuffs a 'ankerchief into the mug, to keep it hot, along with the gravy, and he has his 'baggie, and goes sound asleep as a church."

such a place. There were women there of all ages; and one pleasant-looking young creature in the very centre of the pit, with a babe held fast to her uncovered bosom. The mother had no ring on, but she had an innocent face,* and her presence did me good. The first thing I heard from my private box was the then new song, "God bless the Prince of Wales!" The Prince had just been married, and the more distinctly loyal and affectionate parts of the song were soundly and, I undertake to say, sincerely applauded. Let me be excused for being sentimental enough to add that I was moved by the evident heartiness with which I saw these poor roughs—some of them pickpockets and drifted women—wished well to the marriage. The singers of the song were two—a young man, and a tall, stout woman, with highly-pomatummed hair, a wedding-ring and keeper, a silk gown fixed high in the neck with a large brooch, and a bunch of flowers in her hand, which was red and large with labour. This song was followed by others—the usual Irishman, Scotchman, and what not. Then a dialogue—two

* She might have pawned her ring; but even if she had none to pawn, those of my readers who the most rigidly hold to the association of virtue and order, need not doubt that the woman's face was innocent. There are, or were, until quite recently, corners of London, where, as in some forest district in England, the essence of conjugal virtue exists, though the form and name are alien to the people's ideas. Now and then, I am told, a clergyman undertakes a *civilisade* into these retreats, and marries the willing couples: and I once heard an amusingly painful anecdote of a just-married mother of four children going and flaunting her newly-acquired "virtue" in the face of another mother of a family—not yet married—who had nursed the other lady through a long illness, and pawned her flat-irons to help her. The ungrateful lady was hustled for her pains by some of the other ladies, and in the evening there were a few fights get up among the gentlemen—chiefly bricklayers' labourers—on this great public question.

men, one representing Gutta Percha, and the other Leather, had a sort of sham fight, mixed up with tumbling, singing, and banter, the victory always leaning to the side of Leather, which greatly delighted the audience. I need not say that all this was to me very tedious buffoonery; but though some of the jokes were unquestionable *doubles entendres*, as gross as any in Shakespeare,* I really lay no particular stress upon the fact as an index of character. Humour must always turn on things in which there is a quick and easy common understanding, and what those things are which most readily present themselves to the mind of the humorist depends on culture. Even this low humour had an infinitesimal grain of art in it, and, honestly, I don't believe the people were measurably better or measurably worse for listening to it; and I am satisfied that the majority of the women, in this audience as in others, did not "take" the jokes. It is the silly conceit of men, rather than any real depravity of instinct, which makes them find anything to enjoy in this garbage. However, after this "comic" singing had been continued till I was very sick indeed, the audience began impatiently to stamp, clap, whistle, and shriek out some word which I could not catch. Who was the traveller that has recorded his bewilderment at some Paris theatre when he heard everybody calling out, *Ree-Cat! Ree-Cat!* This (as some readers may guess) turned out to be clipped French for *Henri Quatre;* but no bewilderment could exceed that of the gentleman in the private box, when every voice in this "gaff" seemed to him to be shouting

* I have my eye on one spoken by Hamlet and one spoken by Mercutio.

"Crœsus!" What on earth could the people mean by this classical reference? My wonder soon ceased, when a gentleman, who was hailed with the greatest enthusiasm, came on to the stage and begun to sing a song called "Water-Cresses." This gave unspeakable gratification, the audience making up a chorus at the end of each verse, thus—

> "She promised for to marry me, upon the first of May,
> With a gold ring and a bunch of watercresses!"

At the close of this entertainment the place was cleared, and after a short time, a second audience admitted to a repetition of the programme, or something fresh. In this manner such places are made to pay.

Now, can any thing be uglier than all this? Yet I maintain, stoutly, and with deliberation, that there is more good than harm in it. The ugliest, cruelest thing of all remains to be mentioned—the torture to which acrobats and tumblers put their children in these wretched, half-abortive entertainments. My blood runs cold as I think of the sufferings of the poor contorted little ones, who are slowly killed by their own parents for the sake of a livelihood. This sort of thing would not be removed, but it would naturally be decreased if the whole of this licensing rubbish were done away with and people allowed to present what they pleased upon the stage. As for the audiences—I have a sea of dirty, pinched, bad faces before my mind as I write—I cannot think of them without strong feeling. Of course, the audience at the better class Theatres and Music-halls stand related to audiences such as I have been speaking of, as the people at a west-end

club to the people in a beer-house parlour. Upon these recollections of what I have seen I would merely found an *à fortiori* argument in favour of the removal of all restraint but police restraint, such as is exercised in the next street, from places of public entertainment in which the common standards of decency are maintained. For everywhere I find more to hope than to fear. I wish, indeed, I could expect, in small compass, to express my deep sense of the social importance of mixed assemblies, in which people of all classes, (out of jails and bedlams,) are permitted to meet together for some common purpose, under no restraints but those of police. The tone of mixed assemblies, taken as wholes, is always so much higher than the tone of their lower elements, that they are among the most efficacious instruments of education in manners. The very coarsest put on their "best behaviour" before strangers; and so the habit of self-restraint is begun. When the very worst has been said for the very worst assembly of people that could be got together, it still remains true that all classes of people have a right to meet and amuse themselves in their own way. The better the amusements they choose, the more they will be benefited —we need not waste words over truisms; but our first duty is to leave them their choice. This, at all events, is a lesson in fair dealing—if we accompany our non-interference by an expression of opinion that their choice might be better. The prime duty, here as elsewhere, is to be simply just. If we do that, we shall not miss our reward. I never come away from any assembly of my fellow-creatures, gathered together to partake of an entertainment in common, without

feeling my faith in human nature raised, without a deep triumphing sense how much the good exceeds the bad, wherever men and women meet in large numbers together. Do you remember Sir Roger de Coverley at the play? "As soon as the house was full and the candles lighted, my old friend stood up and looked about him with that pleasure which a mind seasoned with humanity naturally feels in itself at the sight of a multitude of people who seem pleased with one another, and partake of the same common entertainment." I never go to a place of amusement without seeing the ghost of the good old man standing up in the middle of the area.

The question to which these anecdotes and comments have attached themselves, is really a much larger one than it looks. When I was a little boy, I used to hear my elders lament that the Public-house was becoming a Palace of Drink. Yet drunkenness has died out here; has lessened there; has merged into an excited public conviviality; has tended to take on colours of order and domesticity. Like another kind of vice, it rapidly modifies itself, as the screw of *responsibility* is applied; it *disconnects* itself, and ceases to imply general depravation. At the present time, the Public-house is becoming a cross between the Theatre and the Club-room; and there is a hue-and-cry about injury to the Drama, and danger to "Public Morals." Yet I know very well, and so ought you to know, that "public morals" will go on improving: and, as for the Drama, as soon as ever certain elements, not the highest, (though I demand justice for them,) are withdrawn from its

public, it also will be under a beneficent compulsion of progress, which will put new life into it. I do not, indeed, believe that the laws of supply and demand which apply to Art of any kind are *the same* as those which apply to trade. But the laws exist, and they will work. There is no fact of the same mixed order for which such an overwhelming mass of evidence can be collected as the fact that all attempts to make laws for purposes of protection, nursing, or guidance, are worse than stultified; they are always *punished* by the event; and the people who are intended to be benefited are generally the greatest sufferers. The watchword of progress is, Hands off! It proceeds by inducements, not by penalties; only when unjust compulsion is removed does real improvement begin. The first condition of goodness is liberty. When we, who stand for justice, hear people say that the drama must be "protected," we reply, Nothing but *rights* shall be protected if we can help it—if people like to meet together and hear Mr Tennyson's "In Memoriam," Blair's "Sermons," or Herbert's "Porch to the Temple," read while they are drinking and smoking, it is no business of anybody's. To use the words of Macaulay in his speech on the Chapels Bill in the year 1844, I contend against the intolerance of these people now, in precisely the same spirit as that in which I should be ready, in case of need, to contend for their rights against intolerance from any other side. And though this precise bone of contention may be given up immediately, there are plenty more over which will have to be fought battles so very similar, that this little record may have some value as an illustration another day.

XXII.—RECENT ASPECTS OF OPINION.

IT is difficult to tell how much of the real character and tendency of any given time is represented by its literature; but at the present day the actual proportion must be very great, because an attentive observer can often predict the course of events from watching newspapers and reviews. It can scarcely then be wholly idle to glance at certain leading aspects of opinion as represented by literature at the moment of this criticism. For that purpose we shall have to look back a little; but the time for which this will be possible to me does not exceed ten or twelve years. It was not till about 1852–5 that I came into contact with recent literature in

any shape, and my first decisive contact with the great writers who have most influenced the literary "situation," as we now see it, dates no earlier than 1856–8.

At about this time, say 1856, the last great Liberal wave of opinion was higher than I have seen it since; we now appear to be labouring in the trough of quite another wave. Nonconformists and Radicals were then full of hope, they had got a little reconciled to the French Empire; and the literary class in general was not yet infected with cynicism. On the contrary, Transcendentalism and "Sentimentalism" stood in the front. It was a species of crime to find any fault with Mr Dickens, and Mr Thackeray's public was not, I think, a fortieth part in number of what it is now. I should say that, from about 1853 to about 1856, the working section of Liberal thought in England were appropriating the warmth, the energy, and the colouring of the teaching of Mr Carlyle, and working them into the texture of their own thoughts: on the whole, there was a tendency to reject what poor Margaret Fuller called the Titanic and anti-celestial*

* "Unluckily, Mazzini was with us, and his being there gave the conversation a turn to 'progress' and ideal subjects, and C. was fluent to invectives on all our 'rose-water imbecilities.' We all felt distant from him; and Mazzini, after some vain efforts to remonstrate, became very sad. Mrs C. said to me, 'These are but opinions to Carlyle; but to Mazzini, who has given his all, and helped to bring his friends to the scaffold, in pursuit of such subjects, it is a matter of life and death.'

"All Carlyle's talk, that evening, was a defence of mere force—success the test of right; if people would not behave well, put collars round their necks: find a hero, and let them be his slaves, &c. It was very Titanic, and anti-celestial. I wish the last evening had been more melodious. However, I bid Carlyle farewell with feelings of the warmest friendship and admiration. We cannot feel otherwise to a great and noble nature, whether it harmonize with

part of his teaching. I do not know when the "Latter-Day Pamphlets" were published, and have very barely read them—but my judgment of these matters cannot be materially affected by any error in dates. During the Crimean war the prophecies in the "New Downing Street Pamphlets" were, I fancy, often referred to by journalists as having been confirmed by the course of events;—but in those days, I rarely looked at a newspaper.

I think the first thing which gave me any apprehension that the Liberal wave was receding, or being blown back at all, was the gradual acceptance of the French Empire by English opinion. We all sympathised with the courage of Louis Napoleon when he boldly took up the name of *parvenu*, (which had been flung at him,) and when he married Eugenie, young, lovely, and *parvenue* like him. But nothing can ever quench the horror with which lovers of liberty shrink from the thought of this man's career; the most calamitous for the present interests of freedom which modern times can show.

But whilst thousands of people were seduced by the "success" of the Empire, misled by finding the French people quiet at home, and dazzled by the Napoleonic interference in Italy,—other causes were at work in England in lowering the pitch of Liberal thought, and adulterating, not to use a stronger word, the element of serious *trust*, with

our own or not. I never appreciated the work he has done for his age till I saw England.

"Honour to Carlyle! *Hech!* Although, in the wine with which we drink this health, I, for one, must mingle the despised 'rose-water.'"—*Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli. By R. W. Emerson and W. H. Channing.*

which political and social action, as expounded in literature, seemed to be interfused. Another generation was over-taking the hour. Those who, when Louis Napoleon was president, were boys of sixteen, were now young men of twenty or so. [illegible] ated adolescence of England when the [illegible] n to them, found the Liberal wave retiring, [illegible] did not like the look of it. Warmth and wit [illegible] ly so successful as they had been; and popu[illegible] s were quoted lower in the market. Mr D[illegible] ome years produced no *great* work of fiction; and Mr [illegible] ceray, who wrote for "gentlemen," and was only a "Liberal" as every man of genius is a Liberal, was in possession of that field, for the most cultivated readers. Besides this, it was the later writings of Mr Carlyle that were the most ready to their hands—those in which he uses such hazardous and misleading illustrations of his own opinion that the great need of modern times, perhaps all times, is an organising authority. At the same time was being exhibited great activity on the part of schools of philosophic thought, which in old days would have been called "materialistic" (I object as strongly as any man to that word;) and, at this hour, the balance of capacity and culture is, in my opinion, conspicuously on the side of those schools. We had, then, this state of affairs: The most cultivated young men of the time were likely to be influenced chiefly by three kinds of literature—1. Literature, represented mainly by Mr Thackeray, in which life was treated sceptically from the emotional side—with no *philosophic* balance of mind in the writers. 2. Literature, mainly repre

sented by Mr Carlyle, in which the necessity for an autocratic organising power in society was vehemently insisted upon, with the help of equivocal illustrations. 3. Literature in which, from the philosophic side, the idea of any speculative justification, (*i.e.*, *proof* of the actual existence,) of the usual grounds of human trust, was treated with utter indifference—sometimes with irony.

Now, it is a well-known fact that, though Theological "Free Thought"—say Unitarianism or Theism—is often associated with political liberalism, yet philosophic scepticism quite as often as not (to put it no higher) leans to autocracy in politics, and high-churchism in ecclesiastical matters as a natural accompaniment. In the case of the cultivated young intelligence of our own day, there are not wanting, as we have seen, decisive impulses from other quarters. And those impulses, superadded to the natural bias, have conspired to produce the results which are actually exhibited in the most influential literature of the hour.

One other cause, indeed, has conspicuously assisted in determining the bent of energetic young minds of fine culture in these days. For reasons which have been sufficiently discussed, our most highly-educated young men are, in very large proportion, leading celibate lives. Now, a celibate life in all its forms, from monasticism downwards or upwards, is favourable to the cultivation of autocratic tendencies. Life in the family, while it promotes stability and peace, quickens our sympathy with the pain of others, heightens our estimate of the importance of *mutual* responsibility, and in this way tends to freedom in political relations, when other

opinion; bu
to discuss, th
selves.

Nor must i
men, leading
civilised soci
captain and g
sergeant only.
has happened
It is, till man
convenience—
and anxious fo
courtly and sta
and greatness
virtue stamped i
all things a quie

There is no do
the *force*, of the

for Sydney Smith to point this suspicion, though he did;* and it can never be blunted. The popular mind will always be ready to say—"We are not rich enough, or educated enough, to indulge ourselves with reticence and taste. You *are*—and you do it. Why, then, do you interfere with *us? Simply because the inelegant and clumsy frankness of our vices is apt to react in criticism on yours.*" I know very well that the case will never be stated in open conflict as plainly as I state it here; but this is the logic of the situation, and the conflict has to come. It will be conducted by slow degrees. The police of good taste will become stricter and stricter—and *that* is in itself desirable; but the "sentiment" which dictates the policy, having no high moral power in it, will not only fail, as a matter of course, to work up to high issues; it will, in addition, be beaten back by what is moral in the "sentiment" which clings to vice: for the irregularity which cannot afford reticence and good taste may *justly* be indignant if the Marquis of Steyne attacks it. The power being in the hands of his lordship and his party, humble vice takes nothing immediately by its indignation. But it learns a lesson, and betters the instruction. And so the work goes on, downwards and downwards: the natural tendency of a regimen of Force and Taste being simply to honeycomb life with falsehood.

The checks upon the prolonged accumulation of *controlling* force in the hands of masses of organised opinion, or the officers or institutions of organised opinion are not all

* *Edinburgh Review*—Paper on the "Society for the Suppression of Vice"—I forget the number.

so immediately obvious.* There is, of course, the obvious check which lies in the fact that each generation of men and women lives only a certain number of years. Every new generation that is born into the world is in reality born to a world as new as itself. We deceive ourselves if we fancy that the made past impresses the new-comer any more than he impresses the material he finds. He finds what is made; but, action and reaction being everywhere the same, he makes also; and the result is a product wholly new. Formally or informally, the new generation revises the work of the old: it has to start afresh; it has to pay its own premiums to experience; and it will in its turn be as arrogant as its predecessor. And, of course, when we speak of one generation displacing another we use only language of accommodation. A great many generations rise and fall concurrently, *mutatis mutandis*, during a given term of years. The world is not like a great crowded hall out of which one crowd is made to pass before another is let in, and so on for ever: the young, of varying ages, are always with us and around us, working out life for themselves, resisting us, surprising us, showing us new splendours, and provoking us to new resolves and new concessions.

* I omit here all reference to what some call "individuality," and some "eccentricity," as one of these checks; because I have already had so much to say about it elsewhere. In 1856, when I had just begun to write, I happened to print some strong words upon the subject; and in 1858 appeared Mr Mill's great essay "On Liberty," containing passages so curiously parallel, that it was necessary, for my own protection, when I reprinted my little essay, to reprint some of his words in juxtaposition with mine. No candid reader will misunderstand me here. I only mention the fact because I have been accused of "echoing" Mr Mill, and so on.

Although for the present the growth of "the press" points in the direction of the tyranny of commonplace majorities,* yet the influence of *men of letters* is generally the other way. As an individual, the man of letters is likely to be an exceptional person; exceptional in his history, in his character, in his lot. He is, in the majority of cases, a man who has seen much of the world, and its different "experiments of living:" quick to enjoy, and not too ready to be shocked at what is "unusual." Even if he has not seen, he has read, and is, in the good sense, cosmopolitan; impartial between Tyrian and Trojan—Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Add to this what I quote at random from Mr Matthew Arnold—that "every man with a spark of genius in him is *the boon companion* [or friend?] of whatever is noble and beautiful"—and you have in the literary class a genuine "remora or break" permanently existing against any and every form of Imperialism. The "boon companion" is the natural enemy of the martinet; what can Malvolio do with Sir Toby and Maria?

And this reminds me to attempt, though ever so imperfectly, to hint at one other thing, which can hardly be left out of consideration, though it is exceedingly difficult to speak of. A large number of writers appear to assume that the tendencies of civilisation are tendencies which must and will go steadily on, with little interruption, till life in cities, with drilled multitudes as like as peas in a pod, under a police of good taste, shall have absorbed the possibilities of human

* Those who will not accept this from me may turn to Mr Mill's "Political Economy," book ii. chap. xiv. section 4.

nature, and left no margin. I believe in nothing of the kind. At present we see civilised multitudes submitting more or less to drill, and the cry is for *more* drill. But there is in human beings, and especially in youthful crowds, a tendency which can never, never remain wholly in abeyance for very long together. While drill is the order of the day, and to praise it the habit of popular thought, this tendency shows itself chiefly in the shape of vice; beats its drum, or hangs out its flags for it, (I hope these figures of speech will be explicit enough.) But this is only the way in which the tendency, *when masked and diffused*, exhibits itself. The tendency I mean is hard to indicate; if I call it here, as I have perhaps called it elsewhere, the *bacchantic* tendency, I shall come pretty close, in the minds of cultivated readers. No scheme, either of thought or of discipline, has yet been able to knock out of the human heart a tendency to find a *cultus* for the great primitive instincts.* There is a great gulf between

* While these sentences are in the hands of the printer, I find, in the *Saturday Review* of the 26th of May 1866, in a review of Mr Swinburne's "Chastelard," the following beautiful passages:—"That noble and robust simplicity which is naked and not ashamed, the loss of which was the first curse that fastened upon fallen man, does not return in a moment, nor at a mere wish. And to minds trained, as most English minds are, though in different degrees, in habits of Hebrew austerity and rigour, it is not easy to recover a blithe and pure and liberal enjoyment of the infinitely varied play of human emotion, of the exuberant delights of sense, of all the energies of passion. It is quite true that some of the most elementary conditions of civilisation are bound up in the careful government of these delights, and the assiduous discipline of these energies. A process of reaction, not hard to understand, has driven [some people] into forgetfulness of the value of this highly material qualification of the rightful love of all the gifts that nature has put in our hands to enjoy; they have passed to the verge and border of a moral region where some of the most valuable growths of civilisation would be mortally choked. But as the more common tendency is towards the other extreme of confounding a moderating rule and discipline

a festival, such as is described in Mr Tennyson's "Vision of Sin," supposed, and sincerely supposed, to be a religious service—and a modern carnival, or masked ball, or "fair;" and the tendency is wholly to break the line of succession in

over passion and the joys of sense with their violent extirpation as things pestilent and to be ashamed of, [this] excess may be judged leniently. Human nature has been so starved and shrivelled on this side, that it is not worth while to quarrel with the accidental extravagances of those who promise . . . . to do something to enrich and strengthen what has hitherto been the weaker part of modern culture.

"In his preface to a little volume of selections from Byron, which has recently appeared, Mr Swinburne says very justly that neither Byron nor Shelley was content to play with the skirts or paddle in the shallows of nature. 'Their passion is perfect, a fierce and blind desire which exalts and impels their verse into the high places of emotion and expression. They feed upon nature with a holy hunger, following her with a divine lust as of gods chasing the daughters of men. Wind and fire, the cadences of thunder and the clamours of the sea, gave to them no less of sensual pleasure than of spiritual sustenance.' This is truer of Shelley than of Byron, but it is true that in the high places of emotion and the lofty seats of passion, the mind is exhilarated and inspired as by the winds that sweep from over the unmeasured waste of the sea. There is a great quality without which genius is worth little to the world. It is not easy to find an adequate name for this very salt of genius. Perhaps Beneficence is as good as any that we are likely to find, and by it is meant the enlarged and humane sympathy with all happiness, whether of man or beast, or bird or creeping thing, the lofty fervent pity for all the pain of body and pain of soul endured among sentient creatures, and, above all, the strong enthusiasm for all that has been done to add to the stock of happiness, and to take away somewhat from the stock of anguish, in the world. This genial breath of life it is the business of the poet above all others to breathe into men. It is this beneficence which makes Victor Hugo so vastly pre-eminent among the poets of the time. His 'passion and power in dealing with the higher things of nature, with her larger issues and remoter sources,' would be very sublime in any case, but their nobleness is enlarged and enriched a thousandfold by what we have called his spirit of beneficence. The greatest of poets are neither mere subtle-minded vivacious elves and sprites, frisking about in the heated places of passion simply for the joy of frisking, nor mere giants, surveying all life indifferently as Epicurean gods."

In abbreviating the foregoing paragraphs, I have necessarily made a slight alteration or two, (in pronouns and expletives,) but the writer of the article will, if he should happen to see these pages, acquit me of any mutilation of his words. That phrase about the "skirts" of nature is founded on a verse in Part IV. of Shelley's "Peter Bell the Third."

these matters, just as the tendency is to turn commons into enclosed parks. But does anybody imagine this will go on for ever in the same thin, trivial way, unweighted by heart, faith, or conscience as it now is? I do not believe it. On the contrary, when I look at the way in which my fellow-creatures are just now getting to move and feel in masses—when I stand in a great crowd of men and women, and become sensible, as I do, even to wonder and awe, of the moral *heat* there is in them—when I think of the unfathomable depths there are in the human heart, and how complicated life has become, I feel sure I see—through a mist—but I *see*, that this question of movement in crowds has another side to it than the commonplace side. What will happen? I cannot tell; but, for my part, there are times when I feel stifled by the hot atmosphere of these social masses. Then I seem to hear a great glad cry, as of the mighty *life* that is in them; they clap their hands together, they laugh, they weep, they dance; the cymbals clash, and the banners fly; there is purple and gold, and crimson and green; and the streaming hair of the women, and the hoisted children, mad as clouds; a wild musical whirlwind in a silver-rosy mist,—and the vision is past. What does it mean? I feel as if a young and beautiful prisoner, with the purple light of his years upon him, had broken his chains and drawn free breath. But, in sober seriousness, it is nothing *beautiful* that I apprehend for civilisation, except, as all outbreaks of life not base are beautiful. I apprehend rather, that what I have called the bacchantic tendency—which neither Religion, nor Science, nor Polity, scarcely Art, now touches with but a

little finger, and which now simply spots our borders with vice—should some day take on unity and volume, and wake us from our dreams of order and security with a splendid rebellion for which our economy of crowds has had no thought, for which civilisation leaves no space, but in which God will speak out of His whirlwind again, in tones which will not be understood till they are passed into retreating thunder on the skirts of the skies, and men listen for the echo rather than for the voice.

THE END.

Ballantyne, Roberts, & Co., Printers, Edinburgh.

[redacted]

[redacted]